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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 June 1997

Mardi 3 juin 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 juin 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Last night at 12:01 pickets went up at Inco in Sudbury for the first time in 15 years. I want to take this opportunity to urge and indeed to plead with Inco management and union representatives to return to the bargaining table and to bargain in good faith to bring a quick resolution to this unfortunate situation as soon as possible.

I know the people of Sudbury are very concerned for the families of those affected by this strike and wish for an early settlement to the current contract impasse with Inco. I cannot stress enough the importance of all parties working together, quickly, diligently and faithfully working with each other, to bring an end to this. The community of Sudbury, the region of Sudbury, its economy and its people cannot sustain a loss of a \$5-million payroll per week. Our economy just isn't that strong.

I plead with both parties: Please return to the bargaining table. Please work with each other. The region of Sudbury needs your involvement and cooperation to return Sudbury and Inco to a normal operation.

HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): At noon today in Hamilton the Hike to End Hunger and Homelessness was kicked off as walkers commenced their two-week protest walk, protesting the growing levels of poverty among children, among families, among retirees and other seniors in Mike Harris's Ontario; growing numbers of homeless representing a complete cross-section of our communities.

Leaving Hamilton at noon, they proceeded to Ancaster. They're going to proceed on to Brantford, Cambridge, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Acton, Georgetown, Brampton and Etobicoke.

I especially appreciate what Mandy Hiscocks from Guelph had to say, and that is, "Poverty has a human face and it's not some schemer trying to rip off the system, it's someone next door who struggles to get by because they can't find a decent job, because they don't have affordable day care, because the bank presidents who take home \$75,000 a week feels it's not in their best interest to share the resources of this province."

The walk is specifically focussing on the cutbacks of this Harris government along with their policies, these

same Harris policies that have led to massive corporate profits — richer and richer than ever, in the face of ongoing increases in poverty, higher and higher levels of unemployment in Harris's Ontario and lower and lower wages.

INTERGENERATIONAL WEEK

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House of an outstanding accomplishment by Pat O'Connell, a constituent of mine. As you know, the month of June has been dedicated to the celebration of seniors and their contributions to this province. In recognition of the important role of seniors interacting with younger Ontarians, the first week of Seniors' Month will focus on intergenerational activities.

Pat O'Connell is one of 15 individuals from across the province who have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to intergenerational activities.

Pat is an intergenerational program coordinator for Community Care Belleville, an agency providing community-based services to seniors. Over the past 15 years Pat has helped to build a strong relationship between her agency and the separate and public school boards in the Belleville and Trenton area. Through this relationship, Pat has developed intergenerational programs in both elementary and secondary schools.

This government recognizes and appreciates the sacrifice and contributions made by seniors to build a better province for us all. Again, I want to congratulate Ms O'Connell on her achievement and ask all members to join me in welcoming her to the Legislature.

MONTFORT HOSPITAL

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): Yesterday I asked the Minister of Health if he would step in to save the Montfort Hospital in my riding if he believed it would be in the public interest to do so. In response to my question he stated that "the Minister of Health cannot contravene or override a directive from the Health Services Restructuring Commission."

However much the minister may wish to divorce himself from the decisions of the commission, he remains ultimately responsible for those decisions. As the Public Hospitals Act clearly states, "The minister may amend or revoke a direction...where the minister considers it in the public interest."

It may be that someone in his own cabinet let the cat out of the bag on this issue recently. Just a few days ago, the minister responsible for francophone affairs said, "If the commission does not reverse its decision, Mr Harris

and Jim Wilson, the Minister of Health, may intervene." It is time for the minister to admit to his responsibility.

WELLESLEY HOSPITAL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Ontarians are becoming increasingly concerned about this government's plans to shut down community hospitals across this province. Today I'm going to speak up for the Wellesley Hospital, on behalf of the many constituents in my riding of Riverdale who use the many services provided by the Wellesley.

Wellesley Hospital provides health care for some very specific communities whose health would be endangered by losing it. It's the major health care provider for Toronto's inner-city neighbourhoods, for many homeless people, and for the lesbian and gay community. Wellesley was an early leader in working with those groups to come up with a community-oriented treatment approach for people living with AIDS and HIV.

Since Mike Harris announced his plan to close Wellesley, the communities served by Wellesley have organized to protect their services. Their Staying Alive campaign is drawing very broad support, and I would urge all people who care about keeping the special and unique community services that are provided by the hospital to get involved and make your views known.

Next Tuesday, June 10, at 1:30 at University College, the Wellesley is holding an urban health policy forum that I encourage all members to attend, and in particular the member for St George-St David in whose riding this hospital is.

1340

INTERGENERATIONAL WEEK

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I rise today on behalf of my colleague the member for Durham Centre to bring to the attention of my colleagues a tremendous contribution made by a constituent of his, Shana Pankratz. A teacher with the Durham Board of Education, Ms Pankratz, along with many others, is being recognized by the Honourable Cam Jackson, Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for seniors issues, for her outstanding contribution to intergenerational activities.

As you know, as part of Seniors' Month, June 2 to June 8 is the Intergenerational Week in Ontario. This is a time to recognize the efforts of many in our communities who help bring seniors and younger people together, fostering a more active, integrated community.

One of the greatest problems facing today's seniors is isolation or loneliness. Bringing the generations together benefits all. I am sure my colleagues will join me in saluting the efforts of Shana Pankratz and the many like her across this province who are making a difference.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): As Mike Harris's hand-picked wrecking crew, otherwise known as the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is going to be steamrolling into Hamilton tomorrow morning, I want to remind the Minister of Health and this govern-

ment of some shocking statistics that were provided by Hamilton-area hospitals.

Over the past 12 months, on 75 occasions all four emergency departments in all four Hamilton hospitals were on critical bypass. That means that once every five days all four emergency departments were closed, inaccessible to the public. Over the past 12 months, on 132 occasions three out of the four Hamilton hospitals were on critical bypass. When you add that to the fact that on 153 occasions two or more were closed, that means that over the past 12 months there were 360 times that at least two of the Hamilton emergency departments were at full capacity, unable to take people in. This is before Mike Harris's wrecking crew comes into Hamilton; this is before your destruction commission comes in and recommends greater crisis and greatest chaos for the city of Hamilton.

I urge this government, this minister, to take a look at these sobering numbers, take a look at what is really a shocking, unacceptable situation where people cannot access emergency departments, and call off the dogs, call off this crew before they come into Hamilton tomorrow and create greater crisis for us.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): June is Seniors' Month and it is a good time for all of us to reflect on the contribution that seniors have made to our society. Seniors are an important and integral part of our lives, and because they are important it is essential that this month and every month we think about ensuring their quality of life.

In the London area over 700 organizations assist seniors in one way or another. Despite this, as I walked around the ridings of London during the recent weeks, I found that many seniors in my riding continue to live in poverty. The Thames Valley District Health Council report, which was based on the 1991 census, indicates that at least 3,800 seniors live in poverty in the city of London. That number would be much higher now as the ongoing effects of the very severe recession of the early 1990s and the cutbacks of service dollars by this government affect seniors every day.

It is important when we have a time like Seniors' Month that we not get carried away with rhetoric, that we understand the reality of what is going on for seniors in our own communities. All of us as members have in our communities seniors who need assistance and need it now, and it is our job as representatives of those seniors to speak out on their behalf in this place.

INTERGENERATIONAL WEEK

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I rise this afternoon to honour Judy Morrow, a public health nurse with the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound health unit, who was recognized earlier today by Minister Jackson as an individual who has made a significant contribution to intergenerational activities in Ontario.

According to Judy, her appreciation for all that seniors have to offer began at the early age of four, by which

time she had adopted four additional grandmothers with whom to spend her time.

Judy received her registered nurse designation at St Boniface General Hospital school of nursing in Manitoba and completed her bachelor of nursing at the University of Manitoba. Through her employment as a public health nurse with the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound health unit, Judy became involved with the seniors' program at the same time that the Knitting Generations Together project was launched.

Together with several of her colleagues, Judy has implemented one of the most successful Knitting Generations Together programs in the province. Sixty seniors, 575 students from 14 schools and 202 volunteers have become involved in an exciting partnership called HUGS, which stands for Helping Unites Great and Small.

Judy and her colleagues believe that HUGS helps to abolish stereotypes between young people and seniors, encourages cross-generational friendships and helps both groups learn to understand each other.

I ask you to join me in congratulating Judy, who is in the gallery today with her husband, John, for her hard work and for the joy that she has brought to the lives of so many others.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SENIORS' MONTH

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): On behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature and the citizens of our province, it is a great honour to acknowledge Ontario's 1.4 million senior citizens as June is Seniors' Month.

It's a time to celebrate and recognize the abundant contributions that seniors have made and continue to make to life in Ontario; it's a time to reflect on the policies and priorities which are implemented on behalf of seniors and the challenges we face as a province as our society ages; and it's a time to bring greater awareness to the issues that affect seniors in their daily lives.

This year we have partnered with United Generations Ontario and have designated week 1 of Seniors' Month as Intergenerational Week. Today we welcome 15 outstanding Ontario citizens who received awards for the intergenerational program this morning. They are seated in the east gallery this afternoon.

Earlier today, a choir made up of 60 seniors and school children treated us to a wonderful performance at the official launch of Seniors' Month. It's just one example of how every generation learns from those who came before them, which happens to be the theme for Seniors' Month this year: Following in their Footsteps.

In week 2, Caregivers Week, we have worked closely with the Caregivers' Association of Ontario to help bring greater understanding to the many challenges facing the family caregiver.

In week 3 of Seniors' Month, we have partnered with the Elder Abuse Network to bring greater awareness to the issue of the physical, emotional and financial abuse of some of our seniors.

In week 4, we will recognize 20 outstanding seniors from every corner of our province at the annual Senior Achievement Awards.

It's through a lifetime of the hard work and sacrifice of Ontario's 1.4 million seniors that we have such a strong and vibrant province today. Their contributions are enormous. They built our roads, they taught in our schools, they produced the food on our tables, and during the Depression they showed us thrift, sharing and priority-setting, and many served in two world wars to save our freedom. Seniors continue to this day to make significant contributions as members of boards and commissions, as volunteers and as community leaders. To each and every senior in our province, we say a collective thank you.

In Ontario we have a Premier and a government who understand the challenges that come with a growing aging society and are planning not just for the next few years but for the next 30 years and beyond.

We have added 460 new drugs to the Ontario drug benefit plan and continue to maintain the lowest-cost publicly funded drug program for seniors in all of North America. We introduced free pneumonia immunization for every senior in this province, the most comprehensive vaccination program on the continent. We have reinvested an additional \$170 million into community-based health care for seniors and persons with disabilities. After more than a decade of studies, this government has been the one to deliver one-window access to long-term care for seniors with the introduction this spring of community care access centres.

I pledge on behalf of our government that we will continue to modernize and strengthen the health care system, continue to build safer, more tolerant communities and continue to involve seniors in the decisions that affect their lives.

I want to thank the corporate partners for Seniors' Month: Bell Telephone, Today's Seniors, the Canadian Snowbird Association, the Ontario Residential Care Association and Shoppers Drug Mart. With their support, the Seniors' Month poster and all the information kits across the province were produced at no cost to Ontario taxpayers.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the presence today in the gallery of representatives of many organizations for seniors across the province who have participated in the planning for Seniors' Month. Please join me in saluting the seniors of Ontario and celebrating the beginning of Seniors' Month. Especially, I want to recognize in the Speaker's gallery Gordie Tapp, who is this year's honorary chairman for Seniors' Month in Ontario, and his lovely wife, Helen.

1350

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): This afternoon I will be introducing the Public Sector Transition Stability Act, an act to facilitate a fair and orderly transition to improved public services in hospitals, schools and municipalities across Ontario.

Over the coming months, public sector organizations will be restructuring in order to deliver more efficient,

effective and affordable services to Ontarians. We want to ensure that as these changes take place, employees are treated fairly and outstanding labour relations issues are resolved in an expeditious and timely manner.

Our government believes that employers, employees and unions are in the best position to find solutions to their unique labour relations issues. Therefore, the workplace parties will continue to have the opportunity to negotiate collective agreements that are most appropriate to their particular circumstances. However, if they are not able to resolve some of the complex issues, we realize that a legal and institutional framework is needed to ensure that during this time of public sector restructuring, everyone is treated fairly and services continue to be provided to the taxpayers.

To establish this framework, we are introducing this bill, which contains two new acts for the consideration of the Legislature. The first, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, will establish a temporary Labour Relations Transition Commission to deal with the high volume of complex labour relations issues that will emerge as the result of school boards, hospitals and municipalities amalgamating and merging.

For example, if employers and unions cannot negotiate a solution to determine the appropriate bargaining unit, the transition commission will be able to do so. If one union does not represent a substantial majority of employees, or if no agreement is reached by the unions to determine which union will represent employees when two or more unionized workforces come together, the transition commission will be able to do so. In most cases, the determination will be by secret ballot to ensure that the wishes of the affected employees are respected. The transition commission will also ensure that for seniority purposes, equal recognition is given to the years of service of unionized and non-unionized employees.

I would like to point out that our legislation will not eliminate successor rights. As well, contracting out will continue to be an issue for negotiations between the parties.

We have paid careful attention to the needs and concerns of the workplace parties and we have endeavoured to ensure that they continue to work cooperatively to resolve their own unique issues through collective bargaining. I will be asking the parties in the construction industry to provide advice on the application of this act to construction trade unions with construction bargaining rights in the broader public sector.

The second act we are introducing, the Public Sector Dispute Resolution Act, will permanently reform arbitration in the fire, police and hospital sectors, where strikes and lockouts are not permitted.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Clear the galleries.

Minister of Labour.

Hon Mrs Witmer: A permanent dispute resolution commission will be created to promote negotiated settlements and resolve disputes, should negotiations between the parties fail in these sectors. This new process will address concerns that have been expressed for many years and will ensure that the system is more directly accountable to the taxpayer.

This dispute resolution commission will also be used temporarily to administer a binding dispute resolution process during a first contract negotiation following an amalgamation or merger in the broader public sector. This is a temporary power and it can only be exercised at the request of either party. I wish to emphasize that this option will only be available for the negotiation of the first post-amalgamation collective agreement.

By creating greater incentives for the parties to settle disputes themselves, this new process will protect taxpayers against unnecessary disruptions of public services through strikes or lockouts arising out of the negotiations of first contracts after an amalgamation or merger in the broader public sector during this transitional period.

At this time I would like to mention two other aspects of this legislation. In order to facilitate restructuring and to address some other concerns, we are introducing amendments to the Pay Equity Act which will apply to the broader public sector. We are also taking steps to wind down the employee wage protection program, the last program in Canada that uses taxpayer money to cover employers' financial obligations to their employees.

Every level of government in Ontario is attempting to efficiently restructure the way public services are delivered. Upon its passage, this legislation will promote a timely, fair and orderly transition to improve public services in hospitals, schools and municipalities. A key objective will be to ensure that during this time of transition employees are treated fairly and labour relations issues are resolved by the workplace parties whenever possible in a timely and expeditious manner.

I want to re-emphasize that our goal is, above all else, to encourage and provide the workplace parties with the first opportunity to cooperatively resolve their issues through collective bargaining, but if they are not able to do so, to ensure that there is a process that will enable these issues to be resolved in a fair, timely and expeditious manner. This legislation will help us accomplish that goal.

1400

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I want to respond briefly to the Minister of Labour's statement. Minister, you sing a sweet, sweet song. You talked about the timely, fair and orderly transition you're attempting to put in place that's going to arise from public sector restructuring. You tell us that employees are going to be treated fairly.

Do you know how many employees we're talking about? Over 700,000 are going to be affected by this legislation. Do you know how many were consulted in the drafting of this legislation? Zero. Not a single one. That's a hell of a foot to set off on. If you're really committed to ensuring that employees are treated fairly, you would think that at a minimum you would have involved them from the outset in drafting this legislation to ensure that their views are heard.

I can recall when the Premier went apoplectic at the time that Bill 40 was introduced in this province. He said the signal that would be sent far and wide would cause foreign investors in particular to shy away from this.

Does he believe and does this minister believe that labour unrest in this province is in the greater public interest? Do you think that's going to draw to us interna-

tional investors? Do you think that's a good signal to send to the business community? Hardly.

We're talking here about setting up another supposedly arm's-length, objective commission. We know all about those. We've seen them and we've come to know them only too well. We're talking about another fiction. That commission will be made up of choices handpicked by the Premier and the minister to do the minister's and the Premier's work and to make it abundantly clear that they are there to serve the government and to fulfil marching orders.

Minister, it's never too late in these things. Here's my request: Put this legislation aside for the time being. Meet with those who are going to be affected by this legislation. Prove to them that you are honestly and sincerely committed to their welfare. Otherwise, what is about to be unleashed in this province is something the likes of which you simply do not understand and which cannot be in the public interest.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Madam Minister, this piece of legislation called the Public Sector Transition Stability Act really should read Transition Instability Act. You got a taste of it right here today.

How many times does this government have to go through experiences where it tries to pre-empt the existing structures? The Ontario Labour Relations Board, as you well know, is highly regarded and is considered to be highly effective. It has expertise, it has sensitivity, it has competence and experience. In the briefing today, though, and I want to thank you for that, it became quite obvious that one of the reasons for this particular commission was because the labour relations board does not have the resources to deal with such things. Why not? It got its budget cut by over 40% this year, so it has fewer resources to deal with things.

I'd be interested to see how much this is all going to cost, controlled by people you're going to appoint who are going to affect librarians, social workers, nurses, police officers, firefighters — as my leader has said, over 700,000 people throughout the province. Do you really think this is going to build trust and is going to build confidence in your government? It's going to be divisive and you're going to be at war for the next couple of years on some of this.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): We in the opposition party wish to add our thanks to the seniors of this province for their contribution and to the volunteer organizations for helping to recognize it during Seniors' Month.

But we also understand that this will be a month of reckoning for this minister supposedly in charge of seniors' issues and for this Premier, a month of reckoning for having taxed seniors for drugs to the tune of \$220 million; for having taken \$50 million off the OHIP schedule, which we'll hear about momentarily, making them pay for basic medical services; for cuts to hospital operating budgets, pushing seniors who are using those services out of hospitals quicker and sicker and seeing the tragedies, where we've heard unfortunately of too many

seniors tied up sometimes in their hospital rooms or waiting in hospital emergency corridors for up to a week for services, some of them dying there.

Minister, there will be no thanks to your government for your treatment of seniors when we look at long-term-care charges of \$40 a day, at downloading of ambulances and other medical services, at rent control that threatens them in the very security of their home or at property taxes where you refuse to take control. We will be holding you to account on behalf of this province's seniors throughout this Seniors' Month.

Interjection.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): There goes that minister again, who has to get up and apologize.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton East, you're out of order.

Minister, that's out of order. You'll have to withdraw.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I withdraw.

The Speaker: Response, third party.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The minister responsible for seniors knows that all of us in this House share with him the kind of pride he has expressed in the contributions of seniors in this province. But I must tell you, Minister, that seniors all over this province are experiencing poverty, they're experiencing health care deficits, they are experiencing loneliness and isolation, and those are factors that cannot be forgotten while we are celebrating these other things.

I am delighted that you have partnered on abuse of the elderly and I sincerely hope that as we look at abuse of the elderly in this province during this month, we will recognize that poverty is an abuse, lack of medical services is an abuse, isolation and loneliness is an abuse and it is something that all our communities need to join together with the government to resolve.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): To the Minister of Labour in response to her, by and large, declaration of war against the labour movement in terms of the rights of workers, a continuing attack: Let me say to you that the outburst you saw here a little while ago is the first act. You cannot continue to treat working people and their families and their standard of living in the way you have and expect that you can continue to sit there as you have today, smirking and grinning and laughing with your Premier, thinking you can get away with this.

You constantly talk about fairness. That's a word you bandy around this place consistently. Where was the fairness in Bill 7, when you took out the word "fair"? Where was the fairness in Bill 99, when you took out the word "fair"? Where was the fairness in the process?

You heard an outburst earlier from people who were here to watch your attack because they can't believe the media reports, so they came here to see it. You heard them say, "What about the doctors?" You sure took a lot of time and care to make sure the doctors had all the input they needed. That looked like a reasonably fair process. Gord Wilson and the Ontario Federation of

Labour and other labour leaders in this province had no input into this legislation. I'll bet you talked to all your corporate pals, the very same people who are going to gain billions of dollars from your tax cuts. I'll bet you had lots of consultation with them. I'll bet they think you've got a really fair process.

What you're doing today in announcing this legislation is taking away 50 years of tradition of fairness in terms of making sure we can resolve disputes in the public sector in a way that's in the interests of the public sector. Minister, you're a disgrace to that ministry. All you care about is watering down the rights of workers, watering down the standard of living of working people in this province so you can find the money to pay for your tax cut.

The bungled health care cuts, the bungled education cuts and the bungled municipal restructuring are being paid on the backs of the workers in the public sector. I believe sincerely that you're hoping there is a war in our society, because your hope is that people will focus away from the attack on the public services that matter to this province. You're hoping there will be headlines of picket line clashes and work stoppages and work disputes. I believe you're hoping that will happen, to provide you with a cover for the ongoing attack on the quality of life in this province.

If anybody questions whether that's rhetoric, they only need look at the fact that the 30% tax cut is bogus. No working people are benefiting from that; only your corporate pals are benefiting. Inside this legislation, not only do we have taking away the rights of working people in the public sector and allowing the continuing attack on public services; just as if it were a drive-by shooting you're eliminating the last rights in the employee wage protection plan and further cutting pay equity rights that women in this province have fought for, for years, and deserve. They have no relation to this bill. You put it in here because you're hoping it'll get lost in the fray.

Minister, you will go down in history as the most infamous minister against labour that we've ever seen, and you're going to see one hell of a fight taking you on while you do it.

1410

THOMAS COFFIN

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Mr Speaker, I understand we have unanimous consent for a statement regarding the death of OPP officer Thomas Coffin.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Unanimous consent for a statement about OPP officer Coffin? Agreed.

Hon Mr Runciman: As members of the House know, on May 31, 1997, a 32-year-old Ontario Provincial Police officer, Thomas Patrick Coffin, was shot and killed while off duty, just after finishing his shift. He was the eldest of four children.

The job of police officer is fraught with challenges, both off duty and on duty. We owe each and every police officer in this province and their families a debt of gratitude for living and coping with those challenges

every day of their lives. Tom Coffin was a fine police officer, who paid the ultimate price in meeting those challenges.

Tom was known among colleagues and friends as a family man. He was strongly devoted to his wife, Kim, and his children, Laura, seven; Jordyn, three; and Matt, 22 months.

Tom was an avid sportsman and athlete. He played football and junior hockey in high school and coached midget league hockey. Over the past two seasons he was assistant coach and head coach of the Penetang Kings junior C hockey team.

Recently Tom travelled to Scotland, where he played the original golf course, St Andrews. He considered this the fulfilment of a dream.

Tom's career as a policeman began at the early age of 18, when he was accepted as an auxiliary police officer for the town of Alliston. At the age of 21 he joined the Kirkland Lake Police Service. In June 1991 he was hired by the Penetanguishene Police Service. In March 1996 he became an OPP officer when that service was amalgamated with the OPP.

His friends and colleagues say that the words that best described Tom Coffin are the same words associated with the important qualities of a police officer: honesty, integrity and compassion. I'm told Tom had the rare ability to remain calm and in control regardless of the situation.

On behalf, I'm sure, of all members of the Legislature, I wish to extend sincere condolences to Tom's family, friends, co-workers and the people of the town of Penetanguishene. He will be sorely missed.

I would like to request that members of the Legislature join me in a moment of silence to honour the memory of OPP officer Thomas Coffin.

The House observed a moment's silence.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Police officers stare trouble in the eye every day, but most of their encounters end in peace and not in violence. It didn't end that way for Tom Coffin, though. The well-respected former Kirkland Lake police officer was gunned down with a bullet to the head in a bar in Penetanguishene Saturday. He was 32 and the father of three.

I think it's fitting that we as politicians in the Ontario Legislature are the first to rise in our place to pay tribute to the life of a slain police officer, for we are the very first ones who are standing in our place when things go wrong in policing and criticizing the men and women who on a daily basis put their lives on the line for us.

Senior constable Thomas Patrick Coffin, as the Solicitor General mentioned, was formerly with the Kirkland Lake Police Service from 1986 to 1991. I know Mayor Mavrincac, as he expressed in the Northern Daily News, was very shocked and saddened by the death, as Sean O'Connor and others who had worked with him on the police services commission in Kirkland Lake over the years are also very shocked and saddened by this news.

As the Solicitor General mentioned, senior officer Coffin was also involved in his community, as most police officers are, in their various benefit organizations.

Constable Coffin loved hockey, and he coached minor hockey in Kirkland Lake, as he was also a coach in the Penetang junior C hockey league, coaching that team.

We confer extraordinary powers on our police officers, and we place extraordinary demands on them. With all of that, we put them and they put themselves in very extraordinary, dangerous situations. We are all saddened in this House, and on behalf of the Liberal caucus and all the members of the Legislature I wish to send our condolences to the constable's family and all the people he touched in his life.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On behalf of my leader and all of the members of the New Democratic Party, we want to express our very sincere condolences to Tom Coffin's family, to his colleagues and indeed to the citizens he served. This kind of circumstance is one which does make us reflect about how much we owe the men and women in this province who do the task of policing, a task that grows harder every day, a task that exposes them to danger in many ways.

When you have a police officer like Thomas Coffin who obviously, having joined as an auxiliary police officer for the town of Alliston when he was only 18 years old, had a lifelong dream of being a police officer, we know that this was a committed person, a person who throughout his work life had really displayed the commitment to the task of policing that we take for granted in so many of the officers who serve us.

While Officer Coffin's death did not occur directly in the line of duty, there is certainly some suggestion that the positions he took, which he obviously regarded as principled positions around some of the changes happening in policing, may have been one of the background factors to this terrible tragedy. It reminds us all that even when we are in our private capacity there are those who may find it difficult to accept some of the decisions we make, and that is particularly true of police officers.

We hear every year of police officers who find their private lives disturbed and upset by those who blame them personally for carrying out their duties. Sometimes I think as a community we do not offer the kind of support to those officers and their families that we ought to be providing. We expect them somehow to be above the kinds of problems that they indeed face as a result of the work we require them to do.

We are very saddened when something like this happens. We join our colleagues in the House in that sadness and want to make this an occasion for us all to honour the men and women who serve us as police officers in this province and in this country.

The Speaker: I thank the Solicitor General, the member for Timiskaming and the member for London Centre. I will give you my undertaking to send these comments to the officer's family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, as you will recognize, the people of this province together with the rest of the people in Canada exercised their democratic rights and voted. I believe that they sent us here in this

province, and you in particular, a very distinct message. They're saying no to your Tory-Reform agenda. They said no to the divisive us-against-them politics that have characterized Ontario for the past two years. In particular, they have said no to a tax cut.

I know the election has been difficult for you and your caucus. There has been some divisiveness between those who supported the Tories and those who supported Reform. There has been some name-calling; some insults have been traded. I am going to ask a very simple question: Will you listen to what the people are saying and will you drop the tax cut?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I too watched the election results last night with a great deal of interest, and I always listen to the people. I listened to you when you said on February 22, "Taxes are too high." I think that was a reflection of the people of Ontario.

There were three parties who got somewhere between 85% and 90% of the vote who said we need tax cuts. Some said right away, some said a little later. All three of those parties who got close to 90% of the vote said government is too big. It needs to be smaller, more efficient. We need to reform the health care system. We need to balance the books and we need to cut taxes. I'm with those 90% of the people.

1420

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The members for Nepean and Ottawa-Rideau, come to order, please.

Mr McGuinty: I believe the people of this province are with Standard and Poor's when it comes to this issue of the tax cut. This is two failed tests in a row. Yesterday you failed the test when the people of this province voted against Tory-Reform polices. Last week Standard and Poor's gave your tax cut and your policies a failing grade. They refused to upgrade the province's credit rating. They gave you a rating of AA-. They gave you the same rating they gave Bob Rae. I can recall, at the time he was assigned that rating, how you were busting out of your chair and telling him there was simply no way we could withstand those kinds of economic policies for much longer, and now you have managed to replicate that grade.

Premier, once again, I think the people are with Standard and Poor's and I think they're with me on this issue. They don't want a tax cut at this time because we can't afford it. It's causing too much pain. Will you back away from it?

Hon Mr Harris: The Dominion Bond Rating Service said of Ontario's balanced budget plan: "Ontario's fiscal approach is a positive for the future credit outlook of the province. They have come through with what they said they would do." I want to tell you that I agree with the 90% of voters who said yesterday: "We need to balance the books. We need to downsize government. We need to encourage the private sector." And all three parties said we need to cut taxes.

I might tell you that I also agree with the member from Pembroke, Sean Conway, who in reaction to our budget said, "The good news is, there's going to be another cut in the provincial income tax rate."

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I engaged in an activity you shied away from during the past election. I went and knocked on doors and I supported Liberal members. I spoke with people on the doorstep and I can tell you what they told me. I don't derive my information from polls and editorials and columnists.

Let me tell you what they said. They said that we in Ontario are hurting, that our patients are hurting because of cuts that have been done to the funding of our hospitals. They said our kids are getting hurt because you're doing away with junior kindergarten and you've cut funding to children's aid societies. They said our seniors are getting hurt because you've implemented new user fees. They said our future is jeopardized because you've cut funding to post-secondary education. They understand that all of this has been driven by your obsession with a tax cut to be delivered in an immediate sense. Once again, based on all that, and understanding now what I picked up at the doors, will you back away from the tax cut?

Hon Mr Harris: You mention reductions in health care funding. The public yesterday returned 101 out of 103 members of a party, the only party in Canada which has cut health care in Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada, so clearly that was not the issue that was on their minds.

Quite frankly, I say to you that as a result of our tax rate reductions, revenues to the province are booming. They are up, just as when you and the NDP hiked tax rates, revenues went down. I agree with you, I might say to the leader of the Liberal Party, when on Focus Ontario, February 1, 1997, you said, "I see a very bright future ahead for Ontario." So do I.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The second question for the Premier: Yesterday, while people right across the country were exercising their democratic right to vote, you were busy taking away another of their basic democratic rights in this Legislature, and that is the right to be heard by way of their elected representatives. Yesterday, while no one was looking, under cover of a federal election, you brought forward some rule changes that are going to severely limit the right of the opposition to thoroughly and adequately debate legislation, and that's going to greatly interfere with our ability to hold you accountable to the people we enjoy the privilege of serving.

Yesterday your minister attempted to say that your government wasn't really involved in drafting those anti-democratic rules, so I want to ask you very clearly: Do you support those changes? Do you support taking away the democratic right to debate from members of this Legislative Assembly?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): If there are specific details, I'll refer them to the House leader later on, but let me tell you some things that I support. I support the process this government followed, contrary to the Liberals when they made changes. They brought the hammer down and put them right in the House and said, "Here, take it or leave it." No discussion, no debate,

nothing among the House leaders. Then the NDP, when they brought in rule changes, bang, they were introduced: "Here they are. Here's the hammer. Like 'em or lump 'em."

We brought forward a proposal by Mr Baird, the member for Nepean — in a full-blown press conference, not under any hidden mechanism — for consultation. Most of the changes are a reflection of what is already practised in Ottawa or what we found in the House leader's books when Ms Martel was planning the same changes.

We invite your input and your discussion on those rule changes. One thing I can tell you — the public agrees with this — is that the rules were not working to the benefit of the people of Ontario and they want to see some reasonable changes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would warn the members for Essex South, St Catharines, Windsor-Sandwich, Hamilton East, London Centre, Lake Nipigon. I would ask that you all come to order; I'm not warning you again. As well as the member for Algoma; I briefly forgot your riding.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you may not like it, but with the right to govern comes the corresponding obligation to listen. Your own backbenchers have criticized you for failing to listen to them. They say you've got no respect for democracy, you've got no respect for the right of the people and their representatives to be heard, and with these rules changes you've proven that once again. At a time when most Ontarians would agree that you're moving too quickly on too many fronts, these rule changes are going to permit you to move at double time while seriously diminishing our ability to hold you to account.

Premier, what makes you think that you somehow are above listening to the elected members of all three parties in this Legislature?

Hon Mr Harris: No government has listened more, had more public hearings on more pieces of legislation, travelled the province more than has this government. Clearly, if you want to refer to the record, you will find one of the most consultative cabinets, one of the most consultative Premiers and one of the most consultative governments, certainly in the last 12 years, in this province.

1430

Mr McGuinty: Never have Ontarians ever been led by a Premier so willing to ignore the democratic rights of people and their duly elected representatives.

This is the Premier who ignored the people of Metropolitan Toronto when it came to the issue of the megacity referendum. This is the Premier who shoved Bill 26 down our collective throats. This is the Premier who silenced his backbenchers by firing his parliamentary assistants, and today he's decided to set his sights on the members of the opposition alone.

Listening, Premier, is a good thing. It's not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of strength. When Bill 26 was dealt with, to some extent properly, you were forced to introduce 150 amendments in an effort to improve it. That would not have come about had we not had at least some semblance of debate in this Legislature.

Premier, about these rules you've introduced, will you instead take them away from us and allow us to proceed with real debate on your initiatives?

Hon Mr Harris: In my recent memory of rule changes to deal with, as I think one reporter said, the tomfoolery as opposed to the business of the House, never, I believe, since I've been here, have we had a non-cabinet minister develop, in consultation with backbenchers, a proposal for discussion before anything has been tabled.

Once again I say to you that we are pleased to listen. We will prepare to meet with you. I think the member for Nepean has offered to meet with both House leaders. I am taking from your reaction that you're not 100% in favour of all the changes, but perhaps when you read through them and reflect on them, if there are some that you feel need to be changed or if you have some of your own, we'd be pleased to listen to those. I can tell you that the member for Elgin has already brought forward some proposals just today to the member. We're happy to listen to backbench members as well if the leadership isn't interested in participating.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, I realize you're in your seat now, but it's still out of order to heckle.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Today you've launched your latest attack against workers and their democratic rights in Ontario. Your new legislation will effectively take away the right to strike from hundreds of thousands of workers in the municipal sector, the school board sector and ultimately in the entire broader public sector.

Minister, I want to ask you a very straightforward question, and for once, I would appreciate a straightforward answer: Why did you negotiate this bill in secret, refusing to meet with the representatives of the workers who are being attacked by this very legislation?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would like to correct the record and indicate that we have not taken away anybody's right to strike. In fact, what we have done today is that we have ensured that employees and employers sit down and make decisions regarding that first collective agreement, and then, if they are not able to do so, we have set in place a process that would enable them to resolve any outstanding issues. But we have not taken away the right to strike or the right to a lockout.

I would also indicate to you that we have been carefully monitoring the broader public sector and we have determined that there are going to be a huge number of mergers and amalgamations. In order to make sure that each employee is treated fairly as these amalgamations and mergers take place, in order that we don't disrupt services, we have, as I indicated to you, put in place a process that will encourage collective bargaining, but if it fails, there is a process.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, if the public did nothing more than listen to your words, we would think

there's such a fair, gentle process in place that really is meant to have concern for the concerns of everyone. That's not the reality. You've put so much fiscal pressure on municipalities and school boards and hospital boards that they are going to be left with choices no one wants to make. They're going to table agreements that gut collective agreements and rights that workers have and they're going to send it to your hand-picked commission, which will have the power to say: "No strike. Here's your collective agreement, gutted and all."

Why did you treat well-paid doctors so fairly in terms of process, but you won't treat ordinary workers and their families and their income fairly? Why did you treat the two groups differently?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would simply remind you that this legislation is intended to facilitate the collective bargaining that is going to take place as restructuring takes place.

Mr Christopherson: What a load of crap.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton Centre, you have to withdraw that comment. That's out of order.

Mr Christopherson: I probably should have said it's a crock, Speaker. In that case, I withdraw.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The process is intended to ensure that all the parties are encouraged to resolve their own issues together and that each employee is treated fairly when the amalgamations take place. We want to make sure each member within a bargaining unit has the opportunity to make choices, and also if we're bringing together those employees who are not unionized, that they also have the opportunity to be treated fairly.

Mr Christopherson: That's not what's going on here. Anybody who works in the public sector watching here is furious at you trying to hand out that kind of pap and say that's what's going on here.

Let me ask you this: Inside this devastating declaration of war against public sector workers in our province, you're also taking away more rights from some of the most vulnerable workers in the province. For instance, low-paid women workers are losing rights under the Pay Equity Act, and workers who are facing bankruptcy are losing all their rights in terms of wage protection that we brought in so that not just the banks get their money, but workers get their money when there's a bankruptcy.

What's the connection between the attack on the pay equity legislation, the employee wage protection plan and this piece of legislation in terms of the public sector? Defend the connection. Tell us how those are connected in some way, because as far as we're concerned, it's just a drive-by shooting to grab a couple more rights away from workers under this attack.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would again emphasize that we have introduced this legislation in order to encourage the workplace parties to negotiate solutions. I would also just remind you, who was the government that forced employees to join OPSEU, who was the government that introduced the social contract?

Mr Christopherson: Answer my question.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Witmer: In fact it was Bob Rae who said, "We want to give as much" —

Mr Christopherson: Answer my question.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton Centre, I won't warn you again. You must come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Members for Windsor-Sandwich and Kingston and The Islands, I appreciate your help but at this time I think I can handle it.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Former Premier Bob Rae said on March 30, 1993: "We want to give as much scope as possible to the negotiators so they can come up with solutions that make sense for their particular workplace. We have to restructure government to make it more responsive, more efficient, more cost-effective." I remember there was the suspension of the right to strike and lockout under your legislation. Instead, we are ensuring that our legislation enables each employee to make choices.

1440

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last year, according to your own estimates, you cut over \$300 million from hospital operating budgets, and you did that before your hospital restructuring even begins to take place and, I would remind you again, at the cost of health care in this province, as we've shown you again and again in this House.

Then in last month's budget you add a mysterious \$850 million to last year's health spending for so-called restructuring expenditures. So it's not too surprising that we learn of the Grey Bruce Regional Health Centre, which now has a deficit of over half a million dollars. Why? Because they had to pay out \$742,000 in severance costs, the costs of cutting back caused by your government.

Minister, will you be paying the Grey Bruce Regional Health Centre the \$742,000 out of that mysterious \$850 million in restructuring costs?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Perhaps I could clarify for the honourable member that yes, we have asked hospitals to achieve savings, very doable savings, both the last fiscal year and this current fiscal year. But even prior to seeing any of those savings, the health care budget in the province of Ontario, in spite of federal cuts, went up significantly. All the money and more, almost two and a half times more than we've seen in hospital savings to date, has been reinvested into health care, including back into hospitals, so that we can have the shortest waiting lists in the history of the province for cardiac services, so that we could open up 23 new dialysis clinics in a community near to where dialysis patients live throughout the province.

The good news with respect to the reinvestments in health care could go on and on, all \$960 million worth of money into health care reinvested into the system. With respect to Grey Bruce, we'd be happy to look at that.

Yes, there is \$850 million booked there as a result of interim and final decisions put forward by the Health

Services Restructuring Commission. That's to pay for restructuring —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: Minister, what you don't seem to understand is that hospitals have had to restructure by laying off staff before your famous commission even gives its recommendations. That's the point. Garth Pierce, who is the president of the Grey Bruce Regional Health Centre, said: "It was a one-time expense necessitated by government cutbacks. We paid out \$742,000 in severance, notice and early retirement costs."

People all over this province have been telling you and your hospital restructuring committee that what you're doing is shifting the money around. You're stealing from Peter to pay Paul, and it's a false economy. The \$850 million that you put into health care is the cost of paying off all the 10,000 workers who have been severed. It is not going into patient care; it is going into your efforts to downgrade our health care.

Hon Mr Wilson: I obviously don't agree with the premise of the question. I don't know where she gets 10,000 people laid off. The fact of the matter is, most hospitals in this province are doing very well in getting rid of the duplication, the excessive administration that your party and the Liberal Party left in there. When you closed 11,000 hospital beds over the last 10 years in this province, you left what? Buildings half-empty, all of the high-paid administration still there, and fewer and fewer services in those buildings, to the point where we as a government inherited waiting lists that are unethical and immoral in this province.

The nurses are bang on every time they tell politicians that there's no way we should have the waiting lists for services that we have in this province with the record amount of money we're spending on health care. No one in this country today spends more per person on health care than the province of Ontario. Our commitment is to make the system better for patients, get rid of the half-empty buildings and make sure we have modern hospitals with the newest technologies and more services for our growing and aging population.

Mrs Boyd: We don't classify health care workers, 10,000 health care workers who are registered nurses, nursing assistants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, radiology technicians, respiratory technicians — all of those people who support our health care. You say you don't know about 10,000 workers? Your Minister of Labour did, because we know that this bill she's introducing today is to save more money out of the system by ending the protections on severance for health care workers, among other public servants in this province. All of this restructuring costs you money if you have to pay out severance, if you have to give the proper protection to employees who are losing their jobs because of your cuts: not because of restructuring, but because of your cuts.

Minister, we know you think these people are hula hoop manufacturers. We know you think they are duplicates, that they're superfluous. Do you think they do nothing for the quality of health care? You're the one who said it's not about bricks and mortar, it's about the

care they have. What are you doing to health care workers in this —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for London Centre.

Hon Mr Wilson: The finance minister did announce over \$2 billion, unprecedented new money for the health care system, to ensure that we get through the restructuring, we pay the severances that are entitled and we provide the education and retraining that's required.

The honourable member is completely wrong. We have a shortage today of speech-language pathologists. I've announced \$170 million for new community-based services and I cannot get speech-language pathology into seniors' homes because I don't have enough speech-language pathologists. There are not enough physiotherapists in Ontario today. I can't get the in-home services as fast as I'd like to. The money is certainly on the table and out on the streets.

We have a shortage of those professions, so stop scaring young people from going into those professions. Laurentian University put out a study four months ago showing that we're running into a shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses, so stop scaring young people from going into nursing.

There are more and more jobs being created as a result of the growing and aging population. Health care is a booming business in this province, and this government is putting more into health care than anybody else ever in the history of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, that was unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw it.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I withdraw.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED STUDENTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. I want to come back to the story of Gordie Kerwon. You will recall it was about three and a half months ago I raised that issue with you in the Legislature. You agreed to meet with the Kerwons and provided them with your personal assurance that you would do all that was necessary to ensure that Gordie, who is 21 years of age, shortly turning 22, and developmentally disabled, can continue with his schooling, which has been very productive for him and his parents.

Some 15 minutes ago I was on the phone with Mrs Kerwon, and to say the least, she is very, very upset and distraught. Minister, I am asking on her behalf why this matter has not been resolved.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm somewhat surprised by the question from the Leader of the Opposition today. My office, my direct office, was in communication with Mrs Kerwon yesterday.

The ministry has been working with other ministries, trying to resolve an issue for disabled people who are over 21 which has existed in this province for a very long period of time. I'm sure the member opposite must be familiar with the legislation.

I met the Kerwons. I told them we would find a resolution to this. We are working on it now in cooper-

ation with the Minister of Community and Social Services. We are working on that now inside the ministries. We were able to give a progress report to the Kerwons yesterday and I will be in touch with them in the very near future when we have some briefings from the ministry about possible resolutions for this and possible legislation that might help us resolve these issues.

I'm surprised at the tone and tenor of the question. Let's be very clear: We've been working very hard on this issue over the last three months in attempting to resolve this issue for that family and for other families in the province. You ignored this issue when you were in power. For five years you ignored it and now you want action in three months.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I'm somewhat taken aback at your response. I'm not trying to make political hay out of this. I would not have advanced this if Mrs Kerwon hadn't approached me. She doesn't want any more promises; she wants your assurance and she wants action, that come this September her son Gordie will be enrolled in school and that you will somehow find the necessary funding for that — nothing short of that. On her behalf, that's what I'm asking for once again.

1450

Hon Mr Snobelen: Then let me again say to you that I have given the assurance that we will take on this very difficult problem. We are taking that on with all our energy and all our good intentions and we will find a resolution to it for that family and for other families in Ontario. Let me say again, we've done much more in the last three months than you did in five years.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Ottawa Centre, I don't think that's appropriate language. I ask you to refrain. Thank you.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I have a copy of a letter that you sent to your member for Mississauga South regarding one of her constituents who lost their job as a result of your privatization of GO Temp services within the Ontario government. In this letter you assured her that her constituent would receive severance pay, as required by law. Minister, why did you change your mind?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I don't have the letter to the particular individual, but rest assured that this government will ensure that what is required by law, every entitlement, is given to this individual.

Mr Christopherson: Let me try to help a little. The letter says very clearly, "GO Temp employees who have been employed for five years and more would also receive severance pay." In a decision of the Ontario Crown Employees Grievance Settlement Board on May 26, as a result of a hearing on May 20, it says, "The employer" — that's you, Minister — "claimed in its broadest submission that no GO Temp employee was entitled to severance pay."

Minister, how do you justify saying one thing one day to one of your backbenchers and then presenting an opposite legal case in front of the grievance settlement board? How do you justify that?

Hon David Johnson: This is a somewhat complicated situation in terms of the benefits to those on GO Temp, because in many instances they don't have continued service. Some served a certain amount one year, a certain amount the next year etc. It's a situation that has to be determined. The matter has been before the proper authority to determine. Whatever decisions are made through the proper authorities will be implemented and the member can rest assured that at the end of the day, what is required by law will be given to this particular individual and to all the individuals involved with GO Temp.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. I appreciated the statement you made in the House earlier today, but as you spoke you raised a question in my mind that has been raised at a series of meetings I've held across my riding during the past month with seniors and with seniors' organizations.

I wonder if you might respond to that question that's been raised by many, because it involves what I understand is a press release that was done by the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations. It was done some time in the last month and it made comments on seniors and prescription drugs. Minister, have you discussed those concerns with that coalition?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I would like to thank the member for raising this concern on behalf of seniors. I have read the material that he has read, that was presented here and in several forums. The fact is that the coalition, along with a whole series of other senior organizations in the province, has expressed concern about the over-medication of seniors.

When I look at their press release, they suggest that previous governments have failed to look at a series of options. They include in their press release implementing the British Columbia model of reference-based pricing; pressuring the federal government to repeal Bill C-91, the drug patent legislation; demanding pharmacists lower their dispensing fees; educating seniors about misuse of drugs; looking at physician fees and so on.

Seniors, as consumers, have asked that they participate —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Shea: Those of us in this House who serve on the public accounts committee know that we've been giving some consideration of recent time to the Ontario drug benefit program. That was also referenced in the coalition's media release. Would the minister inform the House how the Ontario government's treatment of low-income seniors compares to that of other provinces?

Hon Mr Jackson: This coalition is part of a national organization of pensioners and senior citizens' federations, and they have acknowledged that in all of Canada

and indeed North America the most inexpensive publicly funded drug program is here in this province, and yet it is the most expensive plan for taxpayers in North America at \$1 billion a year on drugs.

They also acknowledge that low-income seniors in Nova Scotia pay a \$215 premium and then 20%; in PEI they pay \$400; in Saskatchewan, \$540; and in Ontario only \$50 a year for low-income seniors on —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

NORTHWESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): My question is to the minister of Health. Mr Minister, as you are well aware, your hospital closing commission recommended that the community hospital in my riding, Northwestern General Hospital, be closed. Supporters of Northwestern submitted a formal appeal, as other hospitals have done in Metro, and requested that the commission reconsider its decision based on the fact that in the case of Northwestern a major study was not taken into account by the restructuring commission.

However, even though the appeal is pending, Northwestern hospital is being dismantled, department by department, service by service. In fact, as we stand here today the microbiology department and the paediatrics department are being dismantled.

How is it fair, when the appeal is before the commission, that the hospital is being dismantled? Shouldn't they wait until the appeal at least is heard?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I am well aware that during a restructuring period — because every other province has restructured. We're the last to do it. In fact, Britain, Australia and New Zealand have all restructured. Learning from those experiences, human beings being what they are, when they hear about a restructuring or a possible closing of a building, they are already tempted to start to move the services. There are a lot of informal agreements going on in the city right now among those hospitals which will receive the increased services or the amalgamating services from other hospitals.

We are monitoring that. Legally, the services are not to move at this point, but I encourage the partners to speak with each other. The operating plans of Northwestern hospital are approved by the Ministry of Health and those services aren't to go anywhere until there's a final determination of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. But, being quite frank with the honourable member, that doesn't mean that the doctors and nurses won't already be making informal arrangements with other hospitals to provide those services.

Mr Colle: Mr Minister, we were told by your closing commission that we could make an appeal. We launched the appeal and the citizens did that. While we're waiting for the appeal to be heard, they're carrying beds out of the hospital, they're carrying equipment out, they're closing departments. People are asking me, "Is this appeal a sham or a farce, or are they just playing games with us?" Will you ask them to stop and desist? Tell them to at least have the common courtesy to wait till they hear the appeal before they take beds out of the hospital.

Hon Mr Wilson: Approval would have to be sought before a major program changes at the hospital. Those approvals have not been granted in the case of any of the hospitals because of the appeal process that's going on and respect for the law that we must have as a government and that the commission must have. We don't own any of the 208 hospitals. If their board decides to do something without approval of the Ministry of Health, which does happen from time to time, then I will use moral suasion; I will do what I can. But your community owns that hospital and your community, along with its board, needs to make sure that the services are in place and that plans are in place before any of those services amalgamate on to the other hospital sites.

At the end of the day, we will have more services for people, for the growing and aging population, but I agree with the honourable member that we have a couple of years where it will be a challenge to make sure there are no gaps in services. Right now there is no approval to move services out of that hospital. That's the best answer I can give the honourable member.

1500

CARDIAC SURGERY

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Virtually every time you stand up and tell us what a great job you're doing in providing restructured health care, you talk about cardiac care, so I'd like to talk about the requirements for heart surgery in Windsor, Ontario, because it affects all of us in the southwest region. The closest accessible facility to Windsor is London, a two-hour drive away. There are approximately 500 patients a year who require heart surgery or angioplasty in Windsor. Only 58% of those are able to get their surgery or their angioplasty within the recommended time period because there are not enough beds in London, there are not enough facilities to accommodate them.

The Windsor cardiologists, the hospitals and the district health council in Windsor have made a joint request to the Health Services Restructuring Commission to give them a cardiac surgery centre. The question is simple: If in fact the commission agrees, will you fund it?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): We have a number of requests, about nine, from across the province from hospitals which are currently not in the cardiac business for cath labs or surgery capacity. The honourable member will know that no politician, since the Liberals set up the Cardiac Care Network, would make the decision as to where the increasing cardiac services should be located in the province.

We rely on advice from the Cardiac Care Network. That is the group of experts that was set up. They also are the ones who operate and control the heart surgery waiting list in this province. Those very experts absolutely are thrilled by the government's \$35-million announcement, and that money is flowing. For the last 10 or 11 weekends the nurses — 80% of that money is going into overtime for nurses — and the cardiac surgeons have been working very hard to ensure we have the shortest waiting lists in the history of the province.

With respect to proposals from Windsor and several other areas, those will all be reviewed by the ministry, but more importantly by the Cardiac Care Network, and we await their recommendations.

Mrs Boyd: In fact, Larry Leigh, who is the regional cardiac care coordinator in this network you talk about, has said very clearly that there is a shortage of beds to look after Windsor patients, that the waits are getting longer. He also says the \$33 million for cardiac surgery the government recently announced is a stopgap measure. Windsor is a city of 250,000 people. There are another 150,000 in the surrounding counties. I ask you again, will you guarantee that if the restructuring commission agrees there should be a cardiac centre, you will see it is funded?

Hon Mr Wilson: The short answer is yes. If the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommends that, in fact if it directs the government to do that, we will fully fund it. That's what the \$2 billion is for, that's what the record-level health care budget is for, to make sure patients receive services. But the commission I know won't do that without the expert advice from the Cardiac Care Network. Both bodies are reviewing that, and when we get those recommendations we will act as quickly as we can.

AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I was pleased to see the attention that agriculture and food received in the 1997 Ontario budget. It's nice to see the budget growing to \$405 million. Agriculture and food has had some harrowing times in the past, and this government is plowing back some resources into this important segment of our economy.

This government has clearly shown its commitment to agriculture and food and the agrifood business, especially with the three-year \$30-million commitment for a rural job strategy. Part of the strategy is to invest in job creation for youth in rural Ontario. Can you inform the House about this program?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I should thank my honourable colleague for that question. Yes, the agrifood sector in Ontario contributes \$25 billion annually to the economy and employs more than 640,000 people. That's very important to our economy and that's the reason why the OMAFRA budget was not cut, indeed it was increased slightly, and that is why that is true —

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Since 1995, Noble.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Absolutely. The agricultural budget was increased, unlike the former government that shut down two of our agricultural colleges. That's why \$3 million will be invested to support a \$2-per-hour rebate for rural employment. I really want to advise all rural businesses, including processors, that the organizations can take part in this rebate, \$2 an hour for rural youth. This government recognizes the importance of the agrifood sector.

Mr Chudleigh: We're having a very late spring this year and all too often this means a long, hot summer. That puts added pressure on harvesting and handling and food processing. Many employers, especially in my riding of Halton North, will want to take advantage of this opportunity, of this program. Minister, could you tell us specifically how this program works?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Eligible employers in rural Ontario will receive a \$2-per-hour rebate for students they employ. Ministry staff are processing applications and we look forward to processing considerably more because they can indeed employ more than one student. Everyone will benefit from the skills and the learning ability that these students will have when working, not only in agriculture but in food processing.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Yesterday a psychiatric patient from the Whitby centre was charged with robbery, sexual assault with a weapon, attempt to choke, forcible confinement and threatening death. Last week another mental patient went AWOL at one of our medium-security institutions, the Queen Street Mental Health Centre.

As you know by now, Minister, there are literally hundreds of other cases where people go AWOL at these institutions. There is an obvious pattern emerging, and I'm asking you today whether you are ready to hold public inquiries, or at least one public inquiry, into these incidents so that public security is guaranteed.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I certainly am launching an investigation to cover both of the incidents that occurred in the last few days. I would also remind the honourable member that, in the past when this has happened, governments have launched investigations and they have been worthwhile endeavours in terms of making recommendations to correct the system to try and ensure as best as possible this doesn't happen.

In particular, the focus of the latter investigation has to be on what is meant by the review board when it says "indirect supervision." We have to look at that and what the interpretation has been of those institutions and what is meant by "indirect supervision."

I will say to the honourable member too that this government has taken decisive action to ensure that the review board has tremendous leadership. It does now have a former Supreme Court judge as the head of the review board, Justice Carruthers, and I know he will look at this matter very seriously, but an investigation is being launched.

1510

Mr Ruprecht: I am not sure the minister understood my question. I am not asking you for an investigation. I am asking you for a public inquiry and all the bells and whistles that go along with it.

As you understand, Minister, both these institutions are medium-security institutions for insane killers. You know that, the whole world knows about that. In the case of the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, you also are aware that from January 1, 1997, until today there have been over 100 calls of missing persons.

If you are aware of these statistics, which I think you are, would it not then make sense to call for a public inquiry, especially since you personally have talked to me about this and you are really personally responsible for instituting this policy, especially when it comes to the Queen Street Mental Health Centre?

We have had demonstration after demonstration in front of the centre. We've talked to this minister and he gave us his personal assurances that these incidents would not —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: That is extremely unfair. It is this member who keeps having protests because he doesn't want a more secure unit installed at Queen Street. Why don't you fess up and tell people here what you're telling me privately and what you're out front demonstrating? We need more secure facilities down there and you've been protesting against that ever since I've been Minister of Health. That is the public record.

The Speaker: New question.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question — *Interjection.*

The Speaker: Just a moment. Member for Parkdale, you have a point of order?

Mr Ruprecht: I'm really very unhappy with the answer I've received to this question and consequently I'm asking you and the table for a late show.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Are you sure you want it?

Mr Ruprecht: Yes, I do. I am very sure, because I know what's going on around here. There's got to be a sense of responsibility, because this can't continue and we need some action.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Parkdale, you'll get your five minutes later on.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, come to order. I don't know how you have a dog in this fight right here. Come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Parkdale, if you file the appropriate papers, we will get it.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. I continue to be puzzled about what the relationship is between you as minister, your ministry and the Health Services Restructuring Commission when it comes to psychiatric hospitals. I'd like to get some clarification from you.

You first took the position that the commission had the right to order the government to close psychiatric hospitals. When they said no, that was not the case, that in fact you are the owner-operator of those hospitals, that they could not order you to do that, that Bill 26 did not give them that capacity, you then proceeded to enter a different relationship.

We have now heard of two letters sent by your deputy minister, Margaret Mottershead, regarding psychiatric

facilities, one in the London-St Thomas area and the other in the Brockville area, and they seem to be remarkably dissimilar in their content. Ms Mottershead talks about the need for outpatient services and forensic services at Brockville, but that was not the question in London-St Thomas where two hospitals are going to be closed.

Would you clarify for us exactly what the relationship is of the ministry and yourself to the commission?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Yes, I'd be very pleased to remind the honourable member that from day one of the establishment of the commission, including remarks in this House, we said we would treat both the legal directives as established with the power that the commission has under the law and the commission's advice. Both would be treated equally as a matter of policy by this government. That answers, I think, the honourable member's question.

With respect to the deputy minister's letters to the commission, those are public letters, as part of the Ministry of Health's response to interim decisions, advice and/or directions from the commission, so there's nothing clandestine about that. Those are public letters. There are two different sets of circumstances, which is very difficult to answer in 10 seconds, and that's why the letters are different. We're trying to respond to the unique needs of the southwestern area versus the northern area of the province, and that's why the letters have slightly different content in each.

Mrs Boyd: I am rather puzzled. I don't know about a northern area. We're talking about two southern areas. The big difference between Elgin and Middlesex is there's not a minister sitting in this House who happens to hold the seat. It's quite clear that that is the only difference and that you're playing politics with this issue of closure of hospitals. It is going to backfire on you in a very big way because it gives the lie to all the other statements you make about disinterestedness.

Why is the deputy minister only responding to suggestions that now have been made to you by the restructuring commission? Why did the same deputy minister refuse permission to the heads of those hospitals and those communities to have some input into the process in the first place?

Hon Mr Wilson: I apologize to the honourable member. I was referring — also there's a letter in Thunder Bay with respect to the directives there.

What I want to know from the honourable member is, what don't you like about the direction? No beds closing unless all community services are in place: That's now guaranteed to the people of the province. It's a heck of a lot better than the policy statements your government or the Liberals made. Repatriation of patients to Ottawa, back to Kitchener-Waterloo from the southwest, back home: You have said for years, your party has said for years, and anyone who knows anything about mental health issues in this province has said for years, that patients should be as close to family as possible; yes, in institutional hospital beds, but close to family — some 40 patients in the southwest going home so that their families can visit them.

I want to know specifically — the honourable member has been putting up with this for months — what don't you like? And what you don't like, you better get on paper and get it into the commission because it would like your advice. It wants to make sure it makes the proper decisions on behalf of patients and their loved ones in this province, so I —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister of Health.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for London Centre, come to order.

MOTIONS

OPPOSITION DAY

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting opposition day.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent for a motion on opposition day. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon David Johnson: I move, notwithstanding standing order 42, the third party be authorized to give notice for an opposition day to be taken up tomorrow.

The Speaker: Mr Johnson moves, notwithstanding standing order 42, the third party be authorized to give notice for an opposition day to be taken up tomorrow.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Is that in his own hand?

The Speaker: That is in his own hand, that's right. Agreed? Agreed.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I've got a petition.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, has proposed the fingerprinting of all Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas fingerprinting of Ontarians was never promised in the Common Sense Revolution, or in his election campaign; and

"Whereas universal fingerprinting of Ontario citizens is a direct violation of basic civil rights and fundamental rights of privacy; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is intervening and intruding into all aspects of daily life, from megacities to user fees to rent controls and market value taxes, which he never promised in the election campaign;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to oppose Mike Harris's plan to fingerprint Ontario citizens, and to respect their privacy and to stop creating a mega-government that does not respect the basic freedom and individuality of the citizens of Ontario."

I affix my fingerprint to the petition and sign it.

1520

HAEMODIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no dialysis treatment currently available in the Cornwall area; and

"Whereas this lack of medical treatment forces dialysis patients throughout Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and beyond to drive to Ottawa or Kingston several times each week, even during dangerous winter weather conditions, to receive the basic medical attention, incurring unnecessary stress, cost and inconvenience; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health promised on April 24, 1996, to rectify this medical shortfall by establishing a dialysis treatment facility in Cornwall; and

"Whereas the promise made by the Minister of Health has to date not been kept, resulting in local patients and their families and friends continuing to drive to Ottawa and Kingston for treatment several times per week during the above-noted conditions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the Minister of Health follows through on the commitment made last April to set up the long-awaited and much-needed health services for Cornwall area residents."

I have also signed that petition.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It states:

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for Sudbury, which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): "Whereas the Conservative Party has broken its promise that it would not close hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party said it would not introduce user fees and proceeded to introduce \$225 million in new user fees for seniors through the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that aid for the disabled would not be cut and proceeded to level millions of dollars in new user fees on to the backs of the disabled; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised there would be no cuts to education and then proceeded to impose cuts which caused the cancellation of JK classes, the cancellation of special education programs and created larger classroom sizes; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party stated there would be no cuts to law enforcement and then cut the budget of Ontario police and courts by more than \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Conservative Party promised that there would be no cuts to the environment and has broken this promise by firing environmental inspectors and cutting the budget that protects the environment by over \$100 million;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative Party to cancel the last stage of its tax scheme, which benefits the wealthiest people in Ontario the most, and restore funding for programs which protect health care, education, seniors and the environment."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

SEXUAL ASSAULT
CRISIS CENTRES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have more petitions that read:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas sexual assault is a crime and the effects of abuse last a lifetime for the survivors of these crimes; and

"Whereas sexual assault crisis centres provide community-based, women-positive, cost-effective services which recognize and respond to both recent, historical and childhood sexual assaults, offering short-term crisis intervention, longer-term therapy, public education, prevention, court and police support;

"Whereas hospital-based treatment centres are mandated primarily to work with survivors of recent sexual assaults with a medical-forensic approach, offering only short-term counselling and referrals, while adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse or historical assaults need longer-term services to recover from the horrendous crimes they have suffered;

"Whereas if Parliament decides to close sexual assault crisis centres and redistribute drastically reduced funds to treatments centres, most adult survivors of sexual assault will not have the services they need to heal and will be further victimized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to maintain community-based sexual assault crisis centres."

I agree with this petition and will sign my name to it.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): This petition was sent to me by the good people of Windsor-Riverside and many in the apartments at 255 Riverside Drive East and is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Windsor-Essex county was the first community to undergo hospital restructuring; and

“Whereas the community supported the recommendations of the Win-Win report based on a funding model that included the expansion of community-based care; and

“Whereas recent reports estimate that Windsor-Essex hospital expenditure is underfunded by approximately \$122 per person; and

“Whereas this represents the lowest funding per capita for hospital services of any community in Ontario with a population of over 200,000; and

“Whereas hospitals across the province have been forced to further reduce expenditures 18%; and

“Whereas these cuts have forced hospitals to eliminate emergency services in the west end of Windsor and other desperately needed services; and

“Whereas the minister acknowledged that additional funding was necessary in high-growth areas;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Minister of Health to provide the appropriate level of funding to hospitals in Windsor-Essex which would allow Windsor Regional Hospital to provide urgent care services for the west end community and to restore equitable health care funding across Windsor and Essex county.”

On behalf of the residents of Windsor-Riverside, we would dearly love for the government to call a by-election.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition regarding long-term care and it says:

“Whereas the government of Ontario has proposed legislation which will set the stage for privatization of municipally funded homes for the aged or long-term care facilities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the process of outsourcing or the privatization of essential support staff in St Lawrence Lodge. We are an essential service to the community.”

I am proud to affix my signature to this petition, which has hundreds of signatures.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai ici une pétition «Sauvons Montfort». J'aimerais aussi mentionner que nous avons maintenant atteint plus de 130 000 signatures.

«À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance dans toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et

qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord le l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé, offrant une gamme complète de services en français, mènerait à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne auprès de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé de l'Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de la communauté.»

J'y ajoute ma signature avec fierté. Merci.

1530

ADULT EDUCATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have yet more petitions from students who attend the Jones Avenue adult school in my riding. It reads:

“We, the undersigned students of Jones Avenue school, believe the government's proposal to cut the educational budget will jeopardize our future. If Jones Avenue school is closed or totally altered, we will have fewer opportunities to learn. If it results in larger classes, it means less individual attention for all the students. The learning effects will be diminished.

“If, as suggested, we are pushed to go to night school, that means we have fewer opportunities to learn as regular students. Also, night school is not secure for women. At night school the teachers and students may not have enough time to know each other.

“Most of the students are new immigrants. They should have opportunities to learn Canadian speaking and Canadian experiences; otherwise, it is painful for them. Many students have successfully completed their credit courses at Jones and they can find good jobs due to their high level of English. They are now contributing to Canadian society. Before, when they were less fluent, their job prospects were low. They had to collect welfare in order to survive in Toronto, an expensive city to live in.”

I am proud to add my name to this petition on behalf of the students learning English in my riding.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I keep getting petitions against charging seniors the \$2 user fee. This petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has started to charge seniors a \$2 user fee for each prescription filled since July 15, 1996; and

“Whereas seniors on a fixed income do not significantly benefit from the income tax savings created by this user fee copayment or from other non-health user fees; and

“Whereas the perceived savings to health care from the \$2 copayment fee will not compensate for the suffering

and misery caused by this user fee, or the painstaking task involved in filling out the application forms; and

"Whereas the current Ontario Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, promised as an opposition MPP in a July 5, 1993, letter to Ontario pharmacists that his party would not endorse legislation that will punish patients to the detriment of health care in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the" Progressive Conservative "government to repeal this user fee plan because the tax-saving user fee concept is not fair, sensitive or accessible to low-income or fixed-income seniors; and lest we forget, our province's seniors have paid their dues by collectively contributing to the social, economic, moral and political fabric of Canada."

I am proud to affix my signature to this document.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the registered voters of the province of Ontario, expect the government we elect to lead our Legislature in a responsible and competent manner; and

"Whereas we expect the government we elect to be the government of all the people and to consult with the opposition and to respect the mandate given the government by the electorate; and

"Whereas the present government, led by Premier Mike Harris, (1) has forced the passage of important legislation without adequate preparation, consultation and debate, and (2) has exceeded the mandate given the government by the electorate, and (3) has passed legislation, including Bill 26, and passed Bills 103, 104 and 107, that increase the power of the government to unduly intrude into the lives of the people and contradicts the values that define us as a compassionate, inclusive and just society, and (4) has caused us to become more divided at a time when we should be overlooking our differences and coming together to find new ways of protecting and nurturing those values to which we all aspire; and

"Whereas we, the registered voters of the province of Ontario, have lost all confidence in the leadership of Mike Harris;

"Then be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of the province of Ontario to remove Mike Harris from the position of Premier by whatever legal means, including his voluntary resignation, and to replace him at the earliest possible moment with a competent and responsive member of the provincial Parliament."

I will affix my name gladly to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition here signed by hundreds of residents of Geraldton, Longlac and Nakina in northern Ontario who are very concerned about the provincial downloading and the effects it will have on all residents. It reads:

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring process proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation and such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Removes school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control over schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and failure to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response pose a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on administration of justice and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 105, An Act to renew the partnership between the province, municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety / *Projet de loi 105, Loi visant à renouveler le partenariat entre la province, les municipalités et la police et visant à accroître la sécurité de la collectivité.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 105 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Parkdale has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health concerning Queen Street Mental Health Centre. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SECTOR TRANSITION STABILITY ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 VISANT À ASSURER LA STABILITÉ AU COURS DE LA TRANSITION DANS LE SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mrs Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 136, An Act to provide for the expeditious resolu-

ution of disputes during collective bargaining in certain sectors and to facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector and to make certain amendments to the Employment Standards Act and the Pay Equity Act / *Projet de loi 136, Loi prévoyant le règlement rapide des différends lors des négociations collectives dans certains secteurs, facilitant les négociations collectives à la suite de la restructuration dans le secteur public et apportant certaines modifications à la Loi sur les normes d'emploi et à la Loi sur l'équité salariale.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mrs Witmer moves that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to provide for the expedition — dispensation? No — resolution of disputes during collective bargaining in certain sectors and to facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector and to make certain amendments to the Employment Standards Act and the Pay Equity Act and that it be now read the first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ross, Lillian
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Brown, Jim	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Snobelen, John
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Doyle, Ed	McLean, Allan K.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Villeneuve, Noble
Elliott, Brenda	Newman, Dan	Wilson, Jim
Fisher, Barbara	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fox, Gary	Palladini, Al	Wood, Bob
Froese, Tom	Parker, John L.	Young, Terence
Galt, Doug	Pettit, Trevor	
Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Boyd, Marion	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerald	Ramsay, David
Chiarelli, Robert	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Martel, Shelley	Silipo, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	McLeod, Lyn	Wildman, Bud
Cleary, John C.	Miclash, Frank	Wood, Len
Conway, Sean G.	North, Peter	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 26.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Minister, do you wish to make any comments?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): No.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BUSES), 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

Mr Froese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to school buses / *Projet de loi 137, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux autobus scolaires.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you wish to make any comments?

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. The bill makes two changes to the Highway Traffic Act. First, the driver of a school bus is required to stop at a railway crossing that is protected by gates or railway crossing signal lights even when the gates or lights are not giving warning of the approach of a railway train. Second, school bus drivers who stop on a highway in a line behind a school bus driver who has stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging passengers are required to actuate the overhead red signal lights and stop arm on their buses while stopped.

These amendments will provide further protection to our most precious resources, our children, while travelling in Ontario's school buses. Each member will have received a package today with background information.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): This is Pat's bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Froese: If you have any questions, please give me a call. I look forward to the debate on Thursday, June 19.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order, when the order of the day is called for third reading of Bill 57, An Act to improve the Efficiency of the Environmental Approvals Process and Certain Other Matters, the Speaker shall put the question forthwith on the motion for third reading, which question shall be decided without debate or amendment. If a recorded vote is requested on the motion for third reading, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes

and no deferral of any division pursuant to standing order 28(g) shall be permitted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Johnson, do you have another motion?

Hon David Johnson: Yes, Mr Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to have the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment and Energy speak to the motion and that after his time is complete, the remaining time be split between the two opposition parties.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed. The parliamentary assistant.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): The government House leader has put forward a time allocation motion with respect to Bill 57, An Act to improve the Efficiency of the Environmental Approvals Process and Certain Other Matters. That motion provides that when the bill is next called for third reading, there would be no further amendments or debate and the question would be immediately put.

In 1992, the NDP government moved a similar time allocation motion on Bill 150, the Labour Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. Bill 150 received only two days' debate on second reading, five days at the standing committee and only one regular sessional day — two hours and nine minutes — at third reading before the bill was time allocated.

We have provided for greater consideration of Bill 57. Bill 57 was introduced on June 3, 1996. That's a full year ago today. It received three days' debate on second reading and four days in committee for public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration. At third reading, Bill 57 has already been debated for an extended sessional day for four hours and 35 minutes — more than twice as long as third reading debate on the NDP government's Bill 150.

We did not want to time allocate Bill 57. Indeed, we have tried to deal with Bill 57 in the best way that we know how: at the negotiating table. For months, the House leaders have been trying to reach agreement with respect to Bill 57, and that obviously has been impossible to do. We have been patient with the opposition parties; however, in order to move forward with our legislative agenda we have no option but to use the rules of the House available to us.

Bill 57 has moved through the legislative process with few amendments that have been proposed, and it is time for us to move forward and debate this motion. Indeed, this is long overdue. I have been regularly asked, as the parliamentary assistant for environment, "When are we going to get on with the standardized approvals?" They have been nicknamed SARs, the acronym for standardized approvals regulations, and it has been rather embarrassing to admit that it's been a full year as of today since it's been introduced. We were in third reading last December and we still don't have it through, all due to resistance on the part of the opposition parties.

Our stated goal a year ago was exactly the same as it is today: to provide effective and responsible environmental protection to the people of Ontario. Bill 57 is, in part, a series of initiatives undertaken by the Honourable Norm Sterling, Minister of Environment and Energy. We are leading the Ministry of Environment and Energy's efforts to reform and to sharpen its regulatory tools.

The best example of these reforms may be our updated and improved environmental assessment systems. I should point out here that our predecessors also proposed reforms to environmental assessment, but they were of an administrative nature only. This government felt that real improvements to environmental assessment could only be made through legislative change. We made this change, and on New Year's Day of this year Minister Sterling announced the final proclamation of these reforms.

Today we have an environmental assessment system that is modern and workable. It maintains all of the classic features of environmental assessment while introducing a number of firsts that enable us to say a faster yes to environmentally responsible projects and also to say a faster no to those projects that are not environmentally responsible.

The reasoning behind environmental assessment reform and other changes being undertaken at the ministry is really quite simple: to enable the ministry to maintain and, wherever possible, to improve upon the high standard of environmental protection enjoyed in the province of Ontario. The Ontario government is not against regulation per se; in fact, as you will see in just a few minutes when I talk about Bill 57, we are proposing to create some new ones. But they will be new ones that work; they will be new ones that produce results.

This focus on results is, I believe, what has been lacking in much of Ontario's environmental protection system. Far too much emphasis has been placed on the process, on how we get to the goal, rather than on the goal itself. This gets to the core of this government's approach to environmental protection. We see our appropriate role as setting tough environmental standards and seeing that those tough standards are met. With its provision for standardized approvals, Bill 57 provides an excellent example of how the ministry is approaching its new role. This was certainly discussed at length during the review on regulatory reform headed up as Responsive Environmental Protection, and certainly has received a lot of support from the environmental community as well as from the industrial community.

Standardized approvals represent an updated approach to the certificate of approvals process. The Environmental Protection Act currently states that anyone proposing an activity that would result in discharges of contaminants to the environment requires a certificate of approval from the ministry. A similar provision exists in the Ontario Water Resources Act for water and sewage works.

As it now stands, you need formal approval from the ministry whether you are a big steel company or a street corner hot dog vendor. I sometimes have to wonder why the previous government didn't require a certificate of approval for people who smoke outdoors. Indeed, they are releasing some contaminants into our environment and I really don't know why they overlooked that particular area. This is what we referred to in the past as "in your face" government. The guiding philosophy is that government knows best.

That certainly is not the view of this government. We don't feel the need to get involved at every step of the process. We don't have the expertise or the resources. We don't believe in dictating to those who know their

business better than we do. How they are to meet their requirements is indeed their business. Our business is setting standards and ensuring those standards are met.

1600

With standardized approvals, and being nicknamed now — you'll probably see it in the future — the acronym SAR, standardized approvals regulation, we propose that certain classes of activities be able to proceed without the need to apply for the certificates of approval. These activities would instead be required to meet strict environmental standards prescribed by regulation. This will lead to consistency. The present system of developing the regulation for each application can lead to a very patchwork type of program across the province. Only activities with predictable and minimal environmental impacts will be considered for standardized approvals.

Bill 57 provides the necessary regulation-making authority, but it does not specify which classes of activity can use the standardized approvals process. This will be decided later through full consultation with both industrial and environmental groups. Broad public consultation will be conducted through the Environmental Bill of Rights registry.

While we haven't determined the activities to be covered, I'd like to offer the following example of how standardized approvals would work. Rather than going the certificate of approvals route, a person opening a small paint spraying operation would instead be required to meet rules established in a regulation for small paint spraying operations. Rather than creating in effect an individual regulation for every single instance, Bill 57 calls for one general regulation covering every instance of a particular type of activity. This does not in any way compromise the environmental safeguards enjoyed in this province. It does, however, deliver the product — environmental protection — more effectively and more efficiently.

It simply means that rather than using the certificate process, we impose similar or stronger conditions through regulation. This is also good news for industry as it eliminates the red tape that's associated with the certificate of approvals process and it very commonly comes up in discussions with industry: "Do you really need all of the red tape that's out there? We want to protect the environment but we don't have the time or the resources to go through the kind of red tape that's been introduced by previous governments." It's been a barrier to job creation in this province. It will also allow environmentally responsible projects to proceed without undue delay.

The public benefits because it does not affect the ministry's ability to ensure compliance or prosecute those who fail to comply with the rules set out in regulation. For the ministry, it will enable staff to use time spent on processing approvals in the more productive way set out in the ministry's business plan.

Before going on to the next section of the bill, I just want to emphasize that standardized approvals would not be used for all classes of activity. Rather, they will be used for activities where the environmental implications are well understood and are predictable and where environmental effects can be mitigated through the application of standardized rules or conditions.

I will take you quickly through the remaining features of Bill 57.

The next feature is environmental compensation. Through this bill, we are putting an end to the Environmental Compensation Corp, which has outlived its need. Those who are responsible for environmental spills are also responsible for cleanup and for compensating the affected parties. The law is clear and remains unchanged.

We've been spending far more dollars on administration than we have on compensation. Over 10 years, it has cost something in the neighbourhood of \$3 million, spending on an average of \$69,000 per year. The bill also includes regulation-making authority for new fees. The ministry proposes to recover the administrative costs of some of the ministry services such as registration and recordkeeping. This will help the ministry do a better job of protecting the environment at less cost to the taxpayer.

The final feature of this bill is the repeal of the Ontario Waste Management Corporation Act. This closes the book on a multimillion-dollar search for hazardous waste facilities. The Ontario Waste Management Corp didn't deliver its intended result. Getting results is exactly what Bill 57 is all about and it's a bottom line for the Ontario government. We want to see an environmental protection system that works.

I believe that Bill 57 is a big step in the right direction and will help the ministry provide better environmental protection and better service to the people of Ontario. It's time to move ahead. We started one year ago with this bill, it was introduced at that time by the Honourable Brenda Elliott, and we're now through third reading. We had third reading in December; this is some six months later and it is time it was passed. Sufficient time has been put into readings; into debate and committee hearings on this bill. Few amendments have been proposed. It is time to move forward. The time allocation motion will allow us to make better use of our time in the Legislature to deal with other issues.

Just reviewing here, the first reading was on June 3, a year ago now. Second reading was in September, and we spent three different days debating it for some eight hours and 17 minutes. We then went to committee and it was in committee for four days; it met here in Toronto. We then went to third reading in December. It was in one of the midnight sessions that we debated this bill. Well over four and a half hours went into third reading debate. I think we've really worked this bill very well and we're going to spend today on the closure motion.

I also extend a sincere thank you to everyone in the House for the time and effort they've put into the consideration of Bill 57. I believe that with this bill in place, Ontario's environment will be better protected for the benefit of generations to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I would like to ask unanimous consent to split my time with the member for St Catharines.

The Acting Speaker: I've been informed that there's already been consent to split the time equally between both opposition parties.

Mr Agostino: I rise to speak in opposition to this bill and in particular in opposition to the time allocation. It's

typical of this government. I realize, to the members across the floor, that the Legislature, with this inconvenience of governing you have to put up with, is a nuisance to you, and you treat it with such contempt on a regular basis. You have treated with such contempt the Legislature with the rules that were introduced on behalf of the Premier by one of the backbenchers yesterday and you continue to treat this Legislature as something you have to put up with while you have, as you believe, some God-given right to do what you want, when you want, to the people of Ontario.

This time allocation is just another one of the many examples of this government believing it has a mandate not to govern but to dictate, to ram everything through when they want, how they want, regardless of any opposition. The opposition again is just an obstacle that you have to get over, in your view and in your way, to dictate and run this province as some medieval king with a castle would like to do or has done in previous ages. That's not the province of Ontario. That is not a democratic system.

Many of the things you're talking about today, many of the changes you're going to propose with your bill, are going to come back to haunt you. When you end up in the opposition two years from now you're going to have to deal with the bills and the changes you have proposed. That is the time you are going to sit back and realize the need for effective opposition and the need to ensure that there's proper opportunity for debate in the House, which you have not given to this bill or, frankly, many other bills that have been brought. I think it's a crock to suggest that you're doing this to get on with other important business of the province. Frankly, you're doing this because, as with every other bill, you don't like debate, you don't like opposition, you don't like people pointing out the flaws in this legislation, and this bill is flawed.

1610

You're great with names. In every bill that you bring forward, you talk about efficiency, you talk about savings, you talk about getting rid of red tape. What you're doing here is getting rid of government involvement in protecting the environment. Bill 57 is another perfect example of that. You believe the role of government is to be out of the way of industry. You believe the role of government is to simply set some loose standards out there and hope that industry follows them.

It was that same role of government, that same philosophy of years ago, that allowed companies across this province to pollute our rivers, our lakes, to put chemicals directly into our harbours through their emissions. That was the type of approach that caused the environmental problems we have today and have had over the years. Successive governments, including real Conservative governments, real Tories like Bill Davis — not the Reformers that are here today — and the Peterson government and the Rae government, throughout the years have spent money, energy and effort trying to correct the mistakes that have been made by previous government philosophies that basically said the private sector should do what it wants and should be their own

police and their own monitor of environmental laws and of pollution controls. This is why we had the problem we had, and you're moving in that direction.

You are moving in that direction with every single piece of environmental legislation. You are saying to the private sector: "You take care of it. Don't worry about it. If there's a problem, we'll just look away and pretend it didn't happen." That is not the way you protect the public. That is not the way you protect the environment of this province.

Bill 57 is a perfect example of what you're doing. What you're doing is getting out of the way of approvals. The certificates of approval were very valuable. Not only did it ensure that particular standards were complied with; it also allowed an educational component.

Look at small businesses. Paint shops are a perfect example of that: automobile-related industries, some of the small businesses which didn't have the ability or the tools to properly train and deal with their employees. The certificates of approval that you are now taking away would have given them that. You've abandoned all that.

There's a simple reason why you have done that. You don't have the staff or the resources to monitor or enforce the regulations in regard to environmental protection in Ontario. It is that simple. You won't even tell us what you're proposing to exempt from the environmental protection after the bill is passed. What you want is a blank cheque. You want us to trust you with the environment. It is ludicrous. Nobody trusts you with the environment in this province. You have been nothing but a wrecking crew since you've come to office when it comes to environmental protection, but you expect the Legislature to pass a bill that says: "Trust us. We'll decide which exemptions will occur. We'll decide where certificates of approval are needed or not needed."

If this were a well-thought-out bill, as the parliamentary assistant says it is, and had had the kind of debate and long-term discussions that he has talked about, I question why the specific exemptions that this government is willing to give are not listed in front of us. Are you looking for a blank approval from this Legislature? I don't think so. It is not going to happen. We don't trust you. Your record speaks for itself. Your record of environmental destruction since you came to office is unprecedented. You have done more to dismantle the Ministry of Environment since you came to office than any previous government in the history of this province, and you've accomplished that in two years. You should be proud of that accomplishment.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): What about your millions of dollars on the tire tax? You were going to solve —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Mississauga South, come to order, please.

Mr Agostino: You should be proud of the fact that you've cut the budget of the Ministry of Environment by \$121 million. You should be proud of the fact that you have cut the budget by 39%. The Ministry of Environment budget has taken a deeper hit, a deeper cut and a deeper beating than any single ministry. I wonder why we still have a minister or a parliamentary assistant, frankly, because you have very little left to do. You've gotten rid

of the rules; you've gotten rid of the staff; you've gotten rid of the budgets. But it feels good to state that you're doing something for environmental protection. The facts don't match that.

This is the government that talks about environmental protection. This is the government that talks about self-monitoring in ensuring the rules are enforced. This is the same government that has cut staff by 722; 31% of the ministry staff has been released, has been fired, has been laid off, since you took office.

It is unprecedented at a time when prosecutions have gone down dramatically, charges have gone down dramatically, and you know why? Because you have sent a clear message. The message doesn't impact the good corporate citizens, because they are responsible. Industries that over the years have taken the right steps, have put in the proper technology and have gone beyond government regulations are not the problem. But the message you have sent out to the polluters is that you are open for business; you are open to ensure that you will allow the destruction of environmental protection in Ontario at any cost to make your corporate friends happy. Why else would you cut 31% of your staff? Why else would you reduce staff by 722, the staff that enforces the regulations you talk about, the staff that monitors, the staff that deals with the companies?

You think somehow you're saving a lot of money here. You may be saving a few dollars in the short term by this, but you're missing the boat on environmental protection. You're missing the boat on health care costs that are being incurred by the taxpayers of this province as the result of water quality, as the result of emission standards that have been lowered, as the result of increased health problems and illness that will occur by the fact that you don't have the staff or the ability to enforce environmental standards across Ontario.

You talk about this bill as somehow being something that simply cuts a little bit of red tape. No. What you have done with this is you have left the door completely open to picking and choosing what areas you feel should not have to go through the certificate-of-approval process and should not have to receive the same scrutiny as before.

You want that blank cheque given to you based on your track record. You don't deserve that blank cheque, you don't deserve that trust to be able to pick and choose, because you have failed miserably so far and you have let the people in Ontario down. Every single time you have changed a piece of legislation as it impacts the environment, it has always been to the advantage of the corporate polluters and to the disadvantage of Ontario. The public interest takes a back seat to the private interest in every single case. Whether it's water, whether it's air, whether it's emissions, in every single case you have sold out the public interest on behalf of your corporate friends. That is your real agenda here.

It is your real agenda here again. If that is not the case, why didn't you bring forward the list? Why didn't the parliamentary assistant or the minister tell us which industries, which chemicals, are going to be exempt? The regulation creates a standardized approval which allows the minister, through regulation, to exempt persons,

activities, things, "contaminant, substance, waste, material, spill, or other matter from requiring a certificate of approval under the Environmental Protection Act or the Ontario Water Resources Act."

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: So the minister and the parliamentary assistant, who is heckling across the floor, with their track record, want us to allow them to determine which exemptions will occur in regard to "contaminant, substance, waste, material, spill, or other matter." That's a pretty broad stroke. That's a pretty open-ended approval you're looking for here today. Again, you don't want to bother coming before this Legislature. You want to be able to sit there quietly in your back rooms, sign off on these things, and they become law for the province of Ontario. You have absolutely no interest in protecting the environment; you have interest only in protecting your friends in the corporate sector who want these changes because it makes it easier for them to do business cheaper in Ontario, at the same compromising environmental protection and health for Ontarians every single day. That is what this bill is all about.

Then you go further and you eliminate the opportunity for people to come after you if you've given an approval and there has been a problem. You have exempted yourselves from any liability from actions or proceedings being sought against the minister or the ministry arising out of an activity carried out under a standardized approval. Not only do you want this blank cheque to do whatever you want, but then, if you make a mistake, if you approve something under this that is harmful to the public or to the health of Ontarians, you also want protection for the public not to go after you.

1620

Somehow, you're above the law. Somehow, what applies to the rest of Ontario does not apply to this minister or this ministry, because you want that special protection. If you're so confident that what you're doing is right and in the best interests of Ontarians and does not harm health and safety, why do you want that provision in the legislation? Why do you take away the right of the public to be able to come after you if you've made a mistake in this regulation? Because you're not sure where this is going. Because you're not sure of the impact of what you're doing, as you're not sure of what you're going to exempt, because you don't have the list here today.

That, to me, is really chickening out. If you're going to make these changes, have the courage to defend these changes in court if they harm people's health or the environment of this province. But you have no interest in doing that because you have this God-given right to govern this province in the way you want and be above the law and above what other Ontarians have to deal with every single day. This is clearly another intent of that.

In this bill you've eliminated the Environmental Compensation Corp. This allowed people whose property may have been contaminated, where environmental damage has been done but they were not able to sue the responsible party, to claim and get some assistance. You've taken that away.

There's a history across this province of gas stations whose underground storage tanks for years and years

leaked and contaminated properties all around that. There may have been three or four owners since that time. That problem has come to light and there's no one you can go after. You may not know where those people are; you may not know which companies owned it; they may have gone bankrupt; they may have left the province, even left the country. Who are you going to sue? There's nobody left to sue there. This gave some protection.

If your insurance company doesn't cover it, that's too bad. If you have contaminated soil in your backyard, if you have oil or gas in the soil in the backyard where your kids are playing, that's tough luck according to this government, because we're going to take away what assistance was there, unless you want to go to court and maybe spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to chase down some company, which I'm sure most average taxpayers and homeowners in this province are not in a position to do. But you don't even care about that. You really do not care, because if you did you wouldn't bring in this kind of regressive legislation.

It is absolutely astonishing that you would pass this off as simply cutting red tape when it is cutting regulations, cutting controls and cutting an opportunity for the public to have some protection. But you don't even care about that. This is the same government that has cut 39% — 92 air monitoring stations have been closed since you've come to office. Maybe you can tell me how that helps the environment. Maybe you can tell me how leaving 13 communities without air monitoring stations is beneficial, how that protects Ontarians' health.

Maybe the parliamentary assistant to the minister can tell us how that is in the best interests of people across this province. Maybe he can tell us why you have reduced odour and dust complaints to "nuisance" as far as a response, which means it's low priority, which means if you get around to it you will — and we realize you can't, and it's not the staff's fault because the front-line staff are stretched to the limit. But you've reduced those to nuisance complaints.

Water monitoring stations: In 1991, there were 700 across this province. Today you have cut that down to 200. That's your work, no one else's; your commitment to environmental protection. We've seen it again and again.

You have cut regulations in regard to transportation of PCBs. You have opened the door to privatizing water across this province. Again the public interest has taken a back seat to the private interest. We just debated a bill in the Legislature last week, Bill 107, that now opens the door to the private sector coming in and owning water and sewer facilities across the province — not operating; owning and setting the rates and holding people hostage. That's what you have done. That is part of your continuous commitment to environmental protection.

You've cut resources to the 16 remedial action plans for the Great Lakes. These were the folks and the plans and the strategies that were in place to undo the damage that years of government mentality such as yours way back allowed the Great Lakes, our harbours, our water in this province to be in the sad shape it has been in. So you cut the funding from the groups that were working to fix that up. That's what you've done.

You've made a 70% cut in funding to 38 conservation authorities. Again, it talks about your commitment to the environment.

You have cut regulations in almost every single area as it impacts the environment and now you're going to move to this, you're going to move to Bill 57. You want a blank cheque to waive regulations and certificate approvals for many industries, many factories. You won't even tell us what they are, except they're contaminants, substance waste, material spill. At the same time, your minister, Norm Sterling himself, has stated that 1,800 people a year in this province die prematurely as a result of air pollution, according to your own ministry figures. At the same time, you move to Bill 57, which opens up the door to further air pollution, to further contaminants, to further waste in this province.

It is ironic that you continue to talk about streamlining and efficiency when what we're really talking about here is cutting, cutting, cutting even further, and Bill 57 is a perfect example of that.

You should listen to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario or the Provincial Auditor, because they're saying the same thing. Let me remind you what the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has said. "We need to work toward...solutions with creativity and flexibility. We cannot afford to focus on short-term savings at the expense of long-term environmental health." That's exactly what you're doing.

Here's something else the Environmental Commissioner has said about your government's track record on the environment. "If we continue along this path, our right to a healthy environment will be jeopardized."

The Provincial Auditor said about your track record and about your work so far that you're so proud of — you speak so proudly of what you've done in regard to the environment. Let me tell you what the Provincial Auditor has said: "To better meet its mandate for safeguarding the environment and human health, the ministry needs to update its standards for air pollutants. Additionally, it needs to improve its monitoring efforts in the areas of air, water and hazardous waste materials." What you are proposing in Bill 57 smacks totally in the opposite direction to what the Provincial Auditor has said you need to do.

The auditor said you need to update and increase your standards, you need to improve your monitoring efforts in air, water and hazardous waste material. What Bill 57 does is allow you to basically throw out the rules when it comes to controlling these items and these waste substances. It doesn't do anything to help; it simply allows you to allow your corporate friends to do what they want when they want.

The Provincial Auditor is independent of political parties. The Provincial Auditor has no special interests. But he has criticized what you're doing and what you continue to do. The Environmental Commissioner has no special interests, has no political party, is simply there to safeguard the environment of this province, and she has criticized severely what you're doing. What you're doing here contradicts totally what both those parties have said you should be doing.

Then you make token efforts. We've raised in this Legislature a number of times the fact that a toxin called

PM10, a fine dust particle, causes at least 25 deaths a year across this province. After dragging his feet, this minister a month ago announced minimum standards for PM10. However, there was absolutely no money, no resources, no efforts made to bring in any type of monitoring equipment, facilities or resources for these standards. Now you've set standards for PM10, for the fine dust particles, but you have no way of knowing whether anybody is meeting those standards because you've shut down the monitoring station. You don't have the staff and you don't have the monitoring equipment. That's like putting a speed limit on a highway and saying, "We now have a speed limit," but then taking away the OPP officer, the radar guns and the monitoring equipment. You have your speed limit but you have no mechanism for enforcing it. You've done the exact same thing here.

1630

The story goes on and on. I can go on for another half-hour. I'm going to wrap up to give my esteemed colleague from St Catharines, the former minister, a chance to talk about this bill.

I want to say to this government: Proceed very cautiously with what you're doing. You may see a few savings here, you may save a dollar here and there with the cuts you're making, but you are damaging the health of Ontarians, you are damaging the environment, you are damaging the future of this province. You've taken us back to environmental standards of 50 years ago.

We now look to our friends to the south, the United States. They put us to shame because they have continued to move in an upward manner in regard to higher standards and higher enforcement, and we've moved in the opposite direction. We can now probably compete with Kentucky and Mississippi. We should be proud of that. We have now lowered ourselves to the common denominator when it comes to environmental standards: the Mississippis of this world. Right now that's where we're taking lessons from. That's certainly where the minister went to tour, along to Kentucky and a few other fine states where standards don't even exist in many areas.

I urge this government to reconsider what you're doing, to move carefully, to ensure that you take the health of Ontarians as a top priority in environmental regulations, that you take the protection of the environment and, for a change, that you look after the public interest before the private interest.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you for the opportunity to make some comments on this time allocation motion and also on the bill and surrounding issues that might relate to this in some general way.

This is a bill which of course is designed to make it easier for potential polluters to be able to get their way, and brings about a situation where those who are in business and industry will not have to exercise the same cautions they did previously before getting approval to do something that might have some detrimental effect on the environment.

Not only is the public at large going to be alarmed by this bill, if they know about it, but good corporate citizens are as well. There's this idea out there that the entire business and industrial community wants the government to retreat on environmental regulation,

legislation and policy. That is not true. There are many good corporate citizens who have invested already in the training and education of their employees, in the development of policies and policy statements which are designed to make them at the very least environmentally benign and at best environmentally proactive corporations or businesses. They have also spent money on equipment and perhaps have hired consultants or consulting firms to assist them in developing their corporate policies as they relate to the environment.

Those good corporate citizens, the ones who have made the investment in the environment, the ones who care about the environment, do not want to see this government relent for those who are not prepared to make that kind of investment in their employees, in their equipment, in their policies and in their general attitudes. They want a so-called level playing field out there.

What used to happen so often was that some companies, of their own volition, would take action which would make them environmentally benign or, as I say, perhaps even environmentally desirable corporate entities, and they would look down the street at another company that could make a quick and dirty profit by not living up to the environmental obligations that a company, of its own volition, would be living up to.

Those companies, those corporate citizens, would say to the Ministry of Environment: "Why don't you have some laws which apply to everybody? Please consult us first. Please give us some lead time so we can implement your new rules and regulations. Please listen to some of the practical suggestions we have on how you can achieve your goals best, because we have some expertise in the field." These people were very helpful in developing public policy. They had no use for the environmentally bad actors.

This legislation may not be entirely bad legislation. I find when you go through bills that come before the House, you can always find something that is commendable within the legislation. There's nothing wrong with governments looking at existing laws, existing legislation, existing regulations, existing policy to see whether they're applicable in 1997, to see whether they make sense. There's nothing wrong with that and the government should not ever be criticized for doing that. But when the goal seems to be to relent on matters affecting the environment simply to please some people who have been annoyed with the Ministry of Environment over the years, I don't think we achieve anything positive for the good corporations or for the public at large and for the natural environment that we are here to protect.

When you make the approvals too easy, when you make the changes so that all the special precautions don't have to be put into place at the beginning, you invite problems later on. It should always be the goal of the Ministry of Environment to limit the risk of problems. You cannot realistically eliminate all the challenges and problems; what you can do is reduce substantially the risk of those problems arising. That's what should be done in legislation in this House. Instead, it is not.

We're going to drive this through with yet another time allocation motion. That means a motion, a resolution that the Harris government — the Reform-Conservative

Party, as we call it, on the other side — is passing in this House this afternoon, because they have 82 seats and they can certainly do so, and there will be a vote at the end of the day, and there's no problem with that, because the government ensures that through the legislation that already exists, the framework that exists within our rules. The government will get its way, but what it will have done is further restrict debate on an important subject that I suspect most people are not aware of.

Speaker, before you entered the Legislature, you were involved in a number of environmental activities in your riding in the east end of Toronto. Now you're the critic for the party. I believe you still are the critic — because you've raised a number of issues in the House, I know you are — and you understand the environmental issues that are out there. I know you must share my concern, as the Minister of Transportation must share my concern, when the government begins to tamper with the approval process to make it easier for people to get approvals without going through the necessary steps.

I know they're annoying. They must be annoying to the Minister of Transportation from time to time. I can recall that when I was the Minister of the Environment I wasn't always on the best speaking terms with the Minister of Transportation or some other ministers, because by its very nature the Ministry of Environment is regulatory. It's there to protect the environment. I use the Ministry of Transportation just because my friend the minister is here this afternoon. His job is to try to get his projects and policies through as quickly as possible to serve the transportation needs of the province. The Minister of Environment on the other hand is there to ensure that all the cautions are put in place so there is a lessening of the risk of any environmental problems.

This bill moves in the opposite direction and it does so because there have always been people out there who don't like the Ministry of Environment, particularly some people in business, some people in industry; not everybody, as I've mentioned, but some of them. They go to the Tory fund-raiser and whisper in the members' ears and say, "Isn't it awful, that Ministry of Environment?"

You'll be interested to know this: They used to call the investigations and enforcement branch the Gestapo. I used to just about fall over when they would say that. I would visit a company and they would always have a vice-president — environment. You'd show up at the company and if the investigations and enforcement branch had been there recently, he would say the Gestapo had been there that week. So I thought they must be doing their job if somebody was unhappy with them.

1640

The problem is that the cuts the member for Hamilton East made reference to, the Liberal environment critic, mean the ministry cannot carry out its obligations as it might have. My friend the member for Dufferin-Peel, who was the critic at one time for the Conservative Party in the field of the environment, used to justifiably want to call governments to account if they didn't have the proper resources and the proper staff to carry out appropriate policies in the environment. I thought his criticism was constructive and helpful, and I know that today he must be beside himself over the fact that this government

is retreating so much from the environmental stance previous governments have taken. I know he shares my view, for instance, that the Minister of Environment should be in charge of the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

I disagree with a lot of what my friend Norm Sterling does in the environment. Norm and I, by the way, were elected the very same date. That's coming up pretty soon too. I think it was June 9, 1977. I hear a chorus of "Too long" on the other side. Norm and I were elected on that occasion. The one thing you can always say about Norm, and I know we're supposed to use the names, the member for Carleton, was that —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): He's a good golfer.

Mr Bradley: Not only that he's a good golfer, much better than I would ever be; I don't even play golf. Even when I go on a golf course, it's alleged I don't play golf. My friend Norm Sterling always had a passion for the Niagara Escarpment and wanted to see it protected. Within the Conservative caucus, there were some members who couldn't be called Friends of the Escarpment; if you put a coalition together, you couldn't call them Friends of the Niagara Escarpment. But my friend Norm Sterling, the member for Carleton, the Minister of Environment and Energy, was indeed that person.

Mr Baird: I wonder where this is going.

Mr Bradley: It's going to the last minute; that's where it's going.

When he was Provincial Secretary for Resources Development — it sounds odd that he'd have that position and still be a protectionist of the environment — he had a lot to do with the first plan that came forward. When the Bruce Trail Association calls people together and eulogizes them — before they're dead, of course. What's the word when you eulogize and you're not dead? There's another word. When they pay tribute to these people, Norm Sterling is always one of the people they pay tribute to, and with justification.

One thing he wanted to do, even if he's prepared to let the environment go in the wrong direction, he's prepared to protect the Niagara Escarpment. What happened? They took it away from him. They took away responsibility. The Premier's office, the people who know better than everybody else, all those unelected people who are much smarter than the government backbenchers or frontbenchers or anybody else, said: "Well, you know, some people don't like this. Let's take it away from Norm and give it to" — who else? — "the Minister of Natural Resources."

Anybody who has been in government — and I had a small segment of time there, some people would say in purgatory, but it's not; it's really quite revealing when you are in government — you'd find out that the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Environment don't always get along. In fact I always thought, in my mind, that the Ministry of Natural Resources was more inclined to look after its clients, those who would exploit the natural resources — I don't say that in as negative a fashion as you might think — those who want to use for business and industrial purposes the resources we have.

The Minister of Natural Resources is now in charge of the Niagara Escarpment. It's going to be interesting to

see who gets appointed to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, because in the past the Tories, the Liberals and the NDP have appointed people who, generally speaking, were there to protect the environment, were there to protect the escarpment. Now I would like to see who is going to be appointed, because I can think of some names that would send chills up my spine. We would see, as I've warned on many occasions, the Escarpment Hilton and the Escarpment Howard Johnson and the Escarpment Holiday Inn — I'm not supposed to be giving commercials here, but whatever the companies happened to be — and the huge tennis courts and so on, and of course the luxury homes for those who will be able to afford them now that they have the tax cut, that is, the richest people in our society, I worry about that.

Here we have a time allocation motion, the government sending the tanks in. I don't mean that literally, naturally, but figuratively sending the tanks in to squash the opposition and to push this bill through so they will have to build even bigger halls to hold the fund-raisers with all those people who will be happy with this legislation. That indeed is going to happen, in my view.

This time allocation motion is all part of the impatience of this government, or at least some members of the government, with the legislative process. Yesterday, under the shield of the federal election, with everyone's attention diverted to the federal election, we had a press conference held in the morning where we had some proposed rule changes brought forward by the member for Nepean. I have the suspicion, borne out I think by fact, that these rule changes were hatched in the Premier's office and in the office of the government House leader and nowhere else and that the — "stooge" is not the word I want — front person for this was the member for Nepean, who was told to go to a press conference and propose these things on the day when the media were out of here and when the public was not paying attention.

The media are paying attention today. They may not be in the Legislature, but I know they're all watching the monitors in their office now and will be cognizant of the fact that a government which has established a reputation as being a bullying government now wants to change the rules even further to push through the Revolution much faster than might otherwise be the case.

In fact I was complimenting, if that's the word you want, in terms of a legislative agenda, some government members yesterday, saying: "You know, you've already passed a lot of bills, probably more bills than other governments, in your first couple of years. I don't agree with a lot of them, but you really haven't been held up in what you're doing."

Under the present rules — I know they're inconvenient some days of the week — at times, and they are rare times, the opposition employs extraordinary procedures in order to slow down the progress of the government in implementing its policies. That's healthy for the system. That's not unhealthy.

Bill 26, the massive budget bill, set up the hospital restructuring commission, which is now coming to all our communities and closing hospitals without recourse to this Legislature, without recourse to elected people, is just shutting hospitals down. That was established under Bill

26. You'll recall that the opposition took extraordinary action, very annoying to some, troublesome to many in the opposition, who don't like having to employ extraordinary action. But it was employed, and as a result we had hearings across the province on Bill 26, all kinds of input, and the government itself brought over 150 amendments to its own legislation as a result of the process that was aided and abetted by the opposition through the action it took.

I've read the proposals, and they're all designed to thwart the efforts of the opposition to slow down the government. I'd put on the table that that is often the role of the opposition. When I go out there and talk to people, not everybody disagrees with what you're doing — many people do, but not everybody — but almost everybody says: "You know, I wish they'd just slow down. I wish they'd take a little more time. I wish they would explain what they're doing and maybe make some changes when they hear from the public or from people who are expert in the field. Make those modifications, and make it better legislation instead of faster legislation."

If you employ these rules, then the people in the Premier's office, the whiz kids, will write up the legislation and you'll have it in the House, and the only role of the other government members outside the cabinet will be to applaud as the minister puts the legislation through and of course to laugh at the Premier's jokes, which is always a requirement if one wants to move up in the cabinet or even get into the cabinet. I'm worried that we're dealing with a time allocation motion again, especially with this bill.

If the government were making some changes and still maintaining the Ministry of Environment, that would be different. I hear the Minister of Environment and Energy say, "We're going to increase the standards," but there is nobody there to enforce those standards. When you fire one third of the staff of the Ministry of Environment, when you're out privatizing the water system, 25% of it, when you're cutting the budget by at least one third, you can't possibly do the job properly. The Ministry of Environment, by its very nature, requires staff and requires resources.

1650

There was a time not long ago when Ontario was considered to be an environmental leader. Indeed, people came from all over Canada, the United States and even some countries in Europe and other parts of the world to Ontario to see what we were doing. Did it cost money? It did, but it was an investment not only in the present but in the future; an investment in the protection of something sacred to all of us, regardless of our political affiliation, that being the environment itself.

I become concerned when I see this kind of action taking place. I become concerned because I know that the provincial government gets some transfer payments from the federal government. Nowadays those funds can be used for anything. There are no strings attached. They used to have to go to health and education and a couple of other things. Now it's a block transfer, a blank cheque the federal government signs and sends to the provincial government. Do they spend it on the environment? No. Do they spend it on health care? No.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): The tax break.

Mr Bradley: The member for Cochrane North says they give it away in a tax break that benefits the richest people in our society the most, and that is certainly the most important thing to remember. This government gets its transfer payments from the federal government and then squanders it, sends a cheque out to the richest people. Those people making their \$400,000 a year get a huge tax cut. That is not a proper use of the funding.

I'd rather see it go into the environment and the health care fields and have the Premier say: "Look, we've implemented half of our tax cut. We now feel that the price we pay in terms of the cuts to services to people is too great. We don't like having to borrow the money for the tax cut and we don't like taking those federal transfer payments and giving them away, so we're going to postpone that tax cut to well into the future when our budget is balanced. Everybody can then look at something in terms of a tax cut with more validity than at the present time."

I worry about that tax cut because I remember the Dominion Bond Rating Service. My friend from Mississauga South, who sits in the chair now and looks so appropriate in that particular location, will remember the Dominion Bond Rating Service, not a bastion of liberalism — certainly no socialists in that group — saying that it would cost the provincial government \$4.8 billion a year in order to finance this tax cut. I know she must be worried.

She is at a disadvantage now because she is unable to respond from the chair, but were she in her seat I know she would be rising to provide her clarification of this issue.

I know she would be interested to look at the context of this bill and some of the things that are happening in the environment, because people in this House should remember that Margaret Marland, as we know her affectionately in this House, the member for Mississauga South, as she is appropriately called, and I think still the chair of the Conservative caucus — is that correct?

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: "Government caucus," as she would refer to it. It sounds more benign and more ecumenical to say "the government caucus."

I will list for her what's happening in the environment, because she too was a good environment critic. She certainly kept me on my toes. When I was the environment minister she had some penetrating questions. She was tough in opposition, as she should be, and she shared some good ideas. She helped out with some things. I appreciated it. I would tell my cabinet colleagues, who were sometimes not as zealous as I in pursuing environmental matters, "I'm going to tell Margaret Marland and she's going to give us all a hard time in the House." So she was very helpful in ways that she didn't even know at the time and I want to pay tribute to her on the work that she did as the Conservative environment critic. I'll share with her some of the things that are happening now that she will be concerned about, I know.

First of all, this government has disbanded the Environmental Assessment Advisory Committee, a good committee. Everybody said, "That just gets in the way of

everything." No, it didn't. That was a committee that went out and investigated in some detail whether a full environmental assessment would be needed on something. They would come back and report to the minister, and then sometimes the minister would not have to proceed with a full environmental assessment if this committee said it wasn't necessary. They were all good environmentalists on it, but they were practical people. Disbanded.

They've disbanded the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement Advisory Committee. I can't believe that. A good group again of people from industry, scientists, people in the technical field, environmentalists who sat on this committee to talk about the implementation of the very comprehensive water pollution regulation that was developed in the mid and late 1980s.

They have disbanded the advisory committee on environmental standards, again a blue ribbon committee — I use the words "blue ribbon" because it will strike a good response on the government side — which advised on what we should do with certain environmental standards. That's gone out the door. Goodbye.

They have terminated the funding for the blue box recycling program, an excellent program which I believe received the support of all parties in this House. I want to pay tribute: Mississauga was one of the leaders in this area. My very good friend Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, was a strong proponent of blue box recycling and I think probably remains that way, but all of them are concerned that the provincial government has now completely withdrawn from funding in this field.

They have cut the green communities program, which boosted Ontario's green industry and saved homeowners and businesses money. They have terminated environmental research grants which were so useful to our universities and made us a scientific leader in the province. They have terminated public environmental education grants, again to set a pattern out there, to provide information to the general public on environmental issues so that all of us, individually and as groups, can play a better role in protecting our environment.

They've terminated the urban and rural beaches cleanup and restoration programs, which speak for themselves, that were there to provide us with good recreational waters. They have terminated the household hazardous waste program, so that's now only the local municipality. They're happy to do it, but they would like some government funding. That kept a lot of hazardous wastes out of the environment, many of which were found in the homes across the province.

They have reduced funding to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, the Ontario Energy Board and the Environmental Appeal Board, all of which need appropriate resources to carry out their responsibilities. They have cut conservation authority funding by 70%, and all of us who have been in government or served at the local level remember that conservation authorities have played an extremely important role in our various communities in preserving the natural environment that we have in those communities.

They have terminated the program aimed at preserving the province's fruit lands. Now I lament the fact that as

I go back to St Catharines in the evening down the Queen Elizabeth Highway, I see, instead of the luscious fruit land out there, in so many cases warehouses along the highway and development taking place where frankly, in my personal view, it doesn't make any sense at all to be taking place. I think many people would agree with that.

They revoked Bill 163, which had measures to protect the environment in the planning process, and they have therefore speeded the development of agricultural land. They have permitted contaminated soil to be used as cover at landfills. I well remember dealing with contaminated soil in Mississauga, with the help of the member for Mississauga South, who gave some helpful advice on how we could reclaim lands which were industrial previously, where there would be some contaminating oils, and how those lands could be converted for other uses.

They are considering eliminating 80 regulations protecting the environment. They have refused to permit the city of Toronto's clean air bylaw, whereas Toronto is prepared to take that initiative. I commend Toronto for that.

They have fired environmentalists from the Hydro board of directors. With the recent revelations we have had about what has been going from Pickering over the past several years into Lake Ontario and Lake Erie under the jurisdiction of Ontario Hydro, this is where we need environmentalists — not the whole group but some environmentalists — on the Hydro board. The member for Oxford agrees with me on that.

1700

They have exempted the Ministry of Finance from the Environmental Bill of Rights. My former colleague Bob Nixon would probably be applauding that. Bob and I from time to time didn't agree on environmental policies — like every time. No, I didn't say that; from time to time, I meant to say, we did not agree on some of those matters.

They have proposed reducing wetlands areas to which strict development restrictions apply. They're reducing, in other words, those wetlands areas. They're permitting the sale of environmentally sensitive lands protected by conservation authorities. They're reducing environmental regulations in the mining industry and they've removed legislative restrictions on the development of public lands.

You can see that this government is in full retreat. I could hear the "beep, beep, beep" sound as the truck moves backwards. I could hear the bugles of retreat out there being sounded as the government heads in full retreat on environmental issues, much to the chagrin, I'm sure, of my good friend the member for Mississauga South, who so appropriately called previous governments to task when they were not pursuing environmental initiatives as she felt they should be. I know I can count on her to share with the members of the Conservative caucus, the government caucus, many of the thoughts that I have shared with members of the House this afternoon.

I urge you to terminate this action this afternoon, to go back to the drawing board and to protect the environment. I suspect, however, that you'll be moving full bulldozer ahead in the very near future.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Here we are at 5 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon and the government is using its majority once again to get its way with respect to legislation in this House and cutting off legitimate debate which should occur on an important piece of environmental legislation.

I listened with some interest to the parliamentary assistant as he talked about the debate which occurred on second reading and the four short days of public hearings which occurred in Toronto and the fact that we debated this bill again during one of the night sittings in December and that now it was time to get an end to this because people were calling his office, they were wanting to know what was happening with the regulations etc.

I say to the government, the government has a majority, the government determines the business, the government calls the business. If it has taken the government a year to get this legislation through, then whose fault is that? It is the government's fault. It is not anyone else's fault.

This is an important piece of legislation. As far as I'm concerned, this legislation allows corporate polluters to write their own rules. It allows them to self-monitor, self-police and basically do whatever the heck they want in the province of Ontario without the public even having the benefit of input on the environmental registry with respect to what they want to do. This is a major change in direction with respect to what has been current practice in Ontario with respect to companies having to have certificates of approval for undertakings. It's a significant departure.

The reason that we find ourselves in this position, having this Conservative government move forward this kind of deregulation bill, is quite simple. The government has decided that the most important thing in its mandate is to deliver on its phoney tax cut. So the government has spent an inordinate amount of time cutting programs, cutting people, cutting public services so that the government can find the funds that it needs in order to finance the tax cut, the funds over and above the \$22 billion that this same government is also going to borrow to make the phoney tax cut a reality.

The impact on a number of government ministries and a number of government services has been tremendous. As the parliamentary assistant sits here this afternoon, I wish he would defend the fact that some 700 Ministry of Environment and Energy employees have got a pink slip, have got the boot out the door under this Conservative government in the last two years. And maybe he would like to defend the fact that over \$200 million has also been cut from the budget of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, a budget that should be used to protect the environment, to protect the public interest in the environment for our children and for their children.

But the reason that we are dealing with Bill 57 here today is that this government has so slashed and burned the staff and the programming at the Ministry of Environment and Energy that this government can no longer protect the environment. This government can no longer live up to the responsibility it has to ensure that environmental legislation is kept in place. This government can no longer ensure that it has enough staff to monitor the

legislation that should be in place and to monitor work sites and workplaces in this province to ensure that the environment is being protected and to ensure that companies are living up to their environmental obligations. That is what is at the heart of Bill 57.

It has nothing to do with cutting red tape, it has nothing to do with getting rid of administrative structures, it has nothing to do with ending duplication. This bill has everything to do with the fact that because of the cuts to the Ministry of Environment and Energy, this Conservative government can no longer guarantee protection of the environment, can no longer ensure that there will be enough staff on the ground, out in workplaces across this province ensuring that corporations and smaller companies live up to their environmental obligations.

That's what this bill is all about: How, in the face of having not enough staff to do the job they're supposed to be doing, can we offload any number of responsibilities on to our corporate friends so that they can self-monitor and self-police and do whatever they want with respect to the environment, wherever they want across the province?

The bill itself does allow corporate polluters to write their own rules. That's the bottom line. The bill allows for whole categories of businesses who operate in the province or who want to operate in the province to do whatever they want without public scrutiny, without inspection, without monitoring, without even having to advise the public of what the undertaking is and what their operation is all about. Therefore, the ministry and the public will have no idea whatsoever of what the classes of businesses are doing in their neighbourhoods and what's happening to the environment as a result.

Mr Galt: Start a hot dog stand.

Ms Martel: The parliamentary assistant has on one other occasion and today here again talked about establishing hot dog stands, as if what is at the heart of the bill is how we're going to let people who operate hot dog stands be out from under the government red tape.

I wish the parliamentary assistant would tell the House that the government has yet to talk about any of the classes in the industrial sector, for example, that the government intends to be exempt, or perhaps the government would talk about anyone who is trying to establish paint shops or dry cleaners or any of the other businesses in the province that use chemicals, that use any number of solvents, that use any number of other toxic substances that can and do have an effect on the environment, especially if they're not handled properly. But the government chooses to say this legislation is to make life easier for people opening up hot dog stands. We want to get them out from under the government red tape.

Let's get serious. We're talking about any number of classes of business in the industrial sector as well, major companies that use solvents, chemicals, all numbers of things that can be hazardous substances, that can be pollutants. The government doesn't want to tell the public that these same classes and categories of business are also going to be exempt from having to get a certificate of approval, are also going to be exempt from having to undergo public scrutiny and public input and public advice with respect to the public's concerns around those operations in their neighbourhoods and their communities.

This bill is far more serious and the government really is dishonest in its wording in trying to say to people that all we're here to do is to make sure some of those small mom-and-pop stores, some of those hot dog operations, don't have to be —

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Margaret Marland): I would ask the member for Sudbury East to withdraw the accusation that the government is dishonest.

Ms Martel: I will withdraw that, Madam Speaker.

It's a crock for the government to assume that all we are dealing with here is small operations that are going to have no environmental impact whatsoever.

1710

The government, in terms of the particulars, wants to use this legislation to get out of the business of environmental protection because it doesn't have the staff to protect the environment. So the government is going to determine what kinds of classes of businesses it's going to exempt from environmental approvals.

The government will say that if you are this particular business and you follow these particular rules set out by the Ministry of Environment and Energy, then you no longer have to have any kind of approval for a specific undertaking from the ministry, that in essence if you follow some of these guidelines, if you follow some form of framework set out by the ministry, set out in regulation — of course we haven't seen that yet — then you don't have to worry about getting any kind of specific ministry approval for some of those undertakings.

It's worth repeating that none of the members in this House have seen what the government has in mind with respect to the classes or categories of businesses it wants to exempt. The government has refused to bring that forward. It refused to bring that forward in second reading debate, in the public hearings, and here we are today and we still haven't seen it. The public has no idea what the government has in mind when it's trying to exempt businesses, and the public has no idea what the government has in mind when it says it wants to exempt industrial sectors from approvals as well.

The government refused to bring that forward in second reading, refused to bring that forward in committee, and here we are today, as the government uses its majority to move this time allocation motion, still not knowing what it is the minister has in mind when he says he wants to exempt whole industrial sectors from having to get approvals.

We are also worried that not only do all these different classes not have to worry now about getting specific approvals, those same classes of businesses, classes of industrial sectors also don't have to advise the public any more about their intentions, about their operation, about their undertaking. Under the bill, members of the public, members of a community, have no guarantee that they will have any opportunity at all to provide input, to provide arguments, to put forward their concerns as to whether or not a company, a business, an industrial company should be allowed to proceed with the undertaking in their community, in their neighbourhood.

It flies absolutely in the face of the bill of rights our government established, which allowed people to have that kind of input. We know that in 1997 in Ontario

many people are concerned about the state of the environment, that many people believe they are entitled to proper information with respect to what companies are doing and the impact that's going to have on the environment in their community. People have a legitimate right to that information, which is why our government spent some long time and some good portion of money to make sure the bill of rights would be in place, to make sure the public had access to that information through their public libraries.

Under Bill 57 what this government is doing is saying: "Classes of businesses, classes of industrial sectors can set up shop in your community and there will be no guarantee whatsoever that you as a member of the public, you as a member of that community are going to have any access to any information with respect to the intentions of that company and with respect to the consequences that operation might have with respect to the environment."

It flies absolutely in the face of everything we tried to do to guarantee the public would have more, not less information; more, not less say about what was happening to the environment in this province.

What will happen is that the public will view startups of companies, will view the approvals process that will be done by regulation, the framework, as something that has been done behind closed doors, in secret; something they have had no attachment to, no input into. All you will get is more and more people who have graver and graver concerns about what's happening in their neighbourhoods, about the impact that businesses and industrial sectors are having on the environment.

We also know that not only will the public not have any guaranteed access with respect to what's happening, as they do now with certificates of approval, but that the public itself is going to be given a mere 30 days under the requirements of this bill to have some input into those classes of businesses that are going to be exempt and those industrial sectors that are going to be exempt; 30 days in which to provide some major input, to write some advice or to share concerns about what the government is doing in this regard.

This represents a major departure from the practice in place at the Ministry of Environment and Energy today, where any number of these companies, small, large, industrial or otherwise, would have to come to the ministry, would have to request a certificate of approval, would have to undergo public scrutiny to be established or expanded. That is changing. It's a major departure, and the government is allowing the public a sum total of 30 days to provide some input with respect to what classes of businesses are going to be exempt.

The public would feel right in assuming that the government more and more wants to make decisions which impact on the environment behind closed doors, in secret, in partnership with their corporate friends. The people who are going to end up losing are members of the public, who will have no way to express their concerns, no forum in which to argue and raise those concerns with respect to what is happening. Not only is there no guarantee there will be public input when a company starts; now you have a 30-day time limit in which to

make comments to the government with respect to what classes will be exempt. The public should feel that they are being shut out more and more with respect to major decisions that are being made with respect to the environment.

If the public weren't worried enough about the fact that they have no access to information and very little access to raise concerns with respect to the classes of businesses which will be exempt under the law, then the public should be very concerned that in this same bill the government also absolves itself of any responsibility, any liability which might arise as a result of the deregulation occurring in this bill. The government says in this bill, "We will protect ourselves from any type of action which might be taken against the government as a result of the deregulation which is going to happen with this bill."

How can the government possibly convince the public that there's no problem with this legislation, that there should be no concerns with respect to what will happen with deregulation, when the government itself, in this bill, says it will not assume any responsibility for what happens, nor can the government be sued or charged with any liability as a result of deregulation?

We saw the government do that in Bill 26, specifically with the health provisions of Bill 26, where the Minister of Health and the restructuring commission were absolved of any responsibility, any liability if anything went wrong with the bill. We saw that again in Bill 15, the workers' compensation legislation, when the Minister of Labour did the same thing. Here we are again, shutting the public out of getting information and making sure the public has no way in which to try and sue the government if they have to, or have the government claim responsibility for whatever happens with respect to the environment as a result of the deregulation which is part and parcel of this whole bill.

We also have grave concerns that the government is getting rid of the Environmental Compensation Corp through the bill. I heard the parliamentary assistant say, "There weren't many claims that were being made from it, so it was too expensive to run and we're going to get rid of it." So what? At the end of the day, when you have a company that pollutes and that company goes bankrupt, takes off out of the province, out of the country, who ends up paying for the environmental mess? The public does. Who ends up paying if an individual suffers personal damage as a result of that spill? That individual does.

What the government does by taking away the Environmental Compensation Corp is to make sure that if any member of the public who suffers as a result of a spill or other environmental disaster, where you cannot find a company or sue the company responsible, that member of the public, that community are going to be stuck with the tab, are going to be stuck with the cost of the damage.

There should be a mechanism in place. If it's not the Environmental Compensation Corp, there should still be a mechanism retained whereby members of the public can claim for damages that happen as a result of a spill, where the perpetrator of that spill, the corporate polluter, has gone out of business and can't be found, can't be traced, so that those individuals and that community don't get stuck with the cost themselves.

1720

The bill also expands the ability of the minister to require fees for any number of things: for approval applications, for record registration, for information requests, a whole number of other matters. Frankly, what I find worrisome about that is that I expect the minister will introduce any number of new fees that will form a barrier for people who are trying to get legitimate information with respect to what a company or a class of companies is doing in their neighbourhood. I am really worried that the government will use the fee schedule, a fee mechanism, to try to bar people from having access to information they have a right to.

We know this government has already been criticized by the information commissioner for the imposition of high fees for requests which have been made under the freedom of information and privacy act. From the same government that promised, "No new user fees," we have seen a whole host of new user fees, not only to raise revenue but, frankly, to bar access for people who are trying to gain legitimate information about what the government is doing. We see again another effort by the government in this bill to make sure that people can't get access to, can't afford access to information they should have with respect to what is happening to the environment, what is happening in their communities.

The government has failed to give us any specific details about this bill, as I said earlier. The government has failed to provide the categories of businesses which will be exempt. The government has failed to provide the list of industrial sectors which are going to be exempt from approvals. I listened to the parliamentary assistant today say that the standardized process for approval will be done later, after the bill is passed, that it will be done through regulation and it will be done with consultation.

If the government's view of consultation for this bill is anything like what we saw in Bill 7, anything like what we saw with the bill the Minister of Labour introduced today to hammer workers in the public sector, you can be guaranteed that the environmental groups will have no input, no way to give advice, no way to participate in a public consultation process. Just like the drafting of this whole bill, it will be the corporate buddies of this government who get to draft the regs, who get to draft the standardized process for approval. People who have major concerns about what is happening to the environment in this province will be shut out of that process.

In conclusion, we're here today as the government uses its majority to move forward yet another time allocation motion to get yet another bill passed. But we're dealing with a bill as well that at its heart has nothing to do with ending duplication but has everything to do with the fact that this Conservative government is completely incapable any more of protecting the environment, of upholding environmental legislation, because it has so gutted the Ministry of Environment and Energy that the staff is completely incapable of upholding their responsibilities any more. That's what's at the heart of this bill, and people who care about the environment are the ones who are going to end up paying.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I listened very carefully to the previous speakers on this time allocation

motion today. As you know, Speaker, I was sitting in the chair at that time and was compelled to listen very carefully, because while in the chair we have to listen to make sure that no unparliamentary things are said. I listened quite carefully, and it was interesting to see that the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, gave the same old tired speech again today.

I've heard it before, again and again. Who writes those speeches for you? He read the same old stuff today in the same old way and made this bill sound so innocuous, as my colleague from Sudbury East said. He talks about — what was it? — hot dog vendors. I remember that when I was first briefed on Bill 57 by the ministry staff, there were some very innocuous examples given. When I and the policy person who came with me from my caucus asked, "What else is going to be included in this? What other businesses and industrial sectors are going to be exempted?" they said: "We don't know. We'll figure that one out later."

I am alarmed that today they're complaining over there, "It has taken a whole year to get this bill through," somehow implying that it was the opposition who prevented them from doing so and that's why they had to bring forward this time allocation today. They make themselves sound so pathetic, like they have no power over there at all to get important bills through. We all know they sat on that bill for a while.

They haven't learned a thing, in the year since they introduced it, about the concern and the alarm out there in the communities about this government's environmental deregulation and cutting and slashing, clear-cutting of environmental laws that have happened throughout this province over the past two years. They haven't learned a thing.

I think this government is in deep doo-doo — is that okay, Speaker? — because when they got elected they promised a 30% tax cut and on top of that they promised deregulation. We know that was part of the agenda: "Regulation is bad."

Interjections.

Ms Churley: I know they're discussing whether "doo-doo" is unparliamentary. I don't think it is, but we might need a dictionary to have a look at it and see what it means.

They have not changed a thing. The parliamentary assistant got up today and said that not many amendments were proposed for Bill 57. Well, as usual, the government didn't listen to any of the environmental experts' concerns about this bill and how dangerous it is. It just ignored them completely and, once again, during the process continued to imply that these environmental groups somehow had something personal to gain and weren't really there to protect the environment.

They didn't listen to a word they said, made no amendments that were put forward and just forged ahead, as usual, in the vein that "We know what's best. All these other environmental experts out there don't understand, don't know what they're talking about, they have vested interests," and just proceeded down the road they started on.

The committee process was a farce. People came with very good presentations, the same environmental groups

that have been watchdogging all governments in this province for over 20 years, who have experts in all environmental matters, who come forward with suggestions, and they're completely ignored.

What do we have today? We have a time allocation motion and we have the parliamentary assistant, as usual, get up and make a tired old speech, the same old words about, "This is really innocuous." I don't think he mentioned it today, but the word that's been used by the minister and I think by the parliamentary assistant is that this is not "deregulation"; nothing this government is doing is deregulation. It's —

Mr Baird: It's reregulation.

Ms Churley: That's right. The member for Nepean knows the language. It's reregulation, they say. Isn't that something? Talk about doublespeak. You should be embarrassed. They're not embarrassed, though. They really believe it, I guess, when the minister stands up and says this is reregulation. It isn't; it is deregulation.

When I hear the parliamentary assistant get up and say, "Trust us. We'll work out later some of these details, and by the way, nobody can sue us" — and these points have been made quite adequately by the member for Sudbury East, the member for St Catharines and the member for Hamilton East earlier today; time and time again these points have been made. If they do make a mistake, the public can't sue them; they're on their own. That is de facto suggesting that they themselves believe there are some really big problems with this new legislation and that they probably will get sued and therefore they are raising themselves above the law.

Somebody just wrote me a note. It says, "Marilyn, leave Doug alone." I don't know; they didn't sign it, but I'm sure it's one of his colleagues over there who cares very much about the parliamentary assistant, who continually has to take the rap for the minister, who disappears during all these debates. I must say as a compliment to the parliamentary assistant, the member for Northumberland, that he does his duty well. He shows up at all the committee meetings. He toes the government line time and time again. No matter what questions are asked that member, he's got the government line and he trots it out. He does a very good job defending his minister's policies, I must give him that, and he shows up for every committee meeting. I will give him that. He's dutiful. He does his job well. He shows up here in the House and continues to give the government line on reregulating and not cutting and actually improving environmental protection in this province. He says that time and time again.

I don't know if he really believes that; it's hard to know. But that's what he does, and he does it well, so I congratulate the member for Northumberland for touting the government's line really well. Maybe he wants to get into cabinet or maybe he's just a good guy; maybe he's just a good Reformer.

1730

Ms Martel: He is a good trained seal.

Ms Churley: I'm not going to say anything like that. But when the parliamentary assistant gets up and says, "Trust us. We want to protect the environment and everything we are doing is actually going to protect the environment better than it's ever been before," I have to

come back to what happened in this House a couple of weeks ago when I asked a question of the Minister of Environment and Energy, Norm Sterling, about the thousands of pounds of copper and zinc that Hydro has been dumping into Lake Ontario for about 25 years.

I must at this point say that I have to hand it to the workers who have been trying over the years to get management at Hydro to let the government know what it was doing.

Mrs Marland: So did you do anything when you were the government?

Ms Churley: The member for Mississauga South asks if our government did anything about it. I can tell you categorically that our government knew nothing about this. If the members over there had read the report, they would know everything we have heard about this, that certain people at Ontario Hydro betrayed the public trust and kept this under cover, under wraps, and deliberately falsified numbers and covered up what they were doing. There needs to be a thorough, independent investigation of what happened there when we have a public entity covering up the amount of toxic substances. Whether they believe it's legal or not, covering it up is a very serious problem.

According to documents I read, his ministry was told of this about a year ago. Nothing happened until it hit the newspaper. Officially it became known to this government about a year ago. They did nothing. Then, when questioned in the House, what did the minister say? He didn't need an independent investigation; he was just waiting until Ontario Hydro conducted their own internal investigation and then he'd see. But when pushed on the thousands of pounds of copper and zinc going into the lake, the minister said: "First of all, I want to make it clear to the people of Ontario that copper is not deemed a toxic pollutant in water. In fact, in terms of the commercial fishery, for instance, they add copper and zinc to supplement their diet. It's needed by those particular habitats."

Ms Martel: Did he really say that?

Ms Churley: He really said that. You know what it reminded me of? Years ago, Ronald Reagan, the then President of the United States, said he thought that trees created pollution. I guess he was implying that if trees created pollution, the industrial polluters out there weren't a problem. He said that and it got international headlines.

Then there was Morley Kells, who was once the Minister of the Environment for that party over there, the Tories, mostly different faces at the time. He was the minister, and if you will recall, Speaker, at that time there was a major PCB spill on a highway up north. Where was it? Do you remember? It was a highway up north and there were grave concerns. It was close to election time when this happened as well, if I recall correctly, and there was a spill from a truck on to the highway. The residents, quite rightly, were extremely concerned about the impact this might have on their health and their kids' health. Mr Morley Kells suggested that if you were a rat eating PCBs on the highway, you might have some problems. I expect the member for St Catharines would remember this, because I believe that line contributed to

the defeat of the Tory party at the time. It was an outrageous thing to say about PCBs on their highway.

Now we have another Tory government where the Minister of Environment, when asked about thousands of pounds of copper and zinc going into the lake water, somehow implies that Ontario Hydro is doing the fish in Lake Ontario a favour. This is outrageous.

I believe the only reason this government is getting away with its deregulation and slashing-and-cutting agenda is because unfortunately the media are not paying much attention to this issue. We know why. It's because there are huge problems in our society right now, which this government has exacerbated. People are concerned, as we saw throughout the federal election, about unity issues. They're concerned about unemployment and their kids being able to get jobs and where to get money to feed their kids. They're concerned about day-to-day existence. They're concerned about losing their quality of life. There are a lot of issues out there right now.

A few years ago, had it been the member for St Catharines when he was Minister of the Environment — and God forbid that he would ever say anything like that; I know he wouldn't — or a minister from the NDP government, if any of those ministers had said that thousands of pounds of copper and zinc going into the lake was good for the fish maybe and was not too concerned about a coverup and was not even admitting it when it was there in black and white, in writing, there would have been headlines about that. It is outrageous for a Minister of Environment to get up in this House and treat such a serious problem in such a fashion.

When the parliamentary assistant gets up and implies — although I don't think he used the words. I will not put words in the parliamentary assistant's mouth, but the implication was: "Trust us. We will consult. Don't worry; be happy." If there was any doubt whatsoever, that has now been put to rest by the Minister of Environment when he says that thousands of pounds of copper and zinc going into Lake Ontario, covered up for all those years, is not such a big problem. We have serious concerns about trusting this government with anything.

I want to come back for a minute to what I said about the press because, as the member for St Catharines said, even though they're not here we know they're back in their offices watching this debate. I'm sure they're all busy typing up their stories about it for the paper tomorrow. I'm sure right now they realize that this is an important —

Mr Baird: Leave the media alone, Marilyn.

Ms Churley: The member for Nepean says to leave the media alone. I think the media are sooner or later going to start paying attention to this problem. The problem is that I've had certain media people say: "We need some concrete examples right now. It's hard to write this stuff." I understand that; it is sometimes hard to write about environmental matters. We use words like "deregulation;" they use "reregulation." They hear a lot about cuts and all of this stuff and changes to the Environmental Assessment Act, and the Tories give these great titles for their acts, like "Responsive Environmental Protection" and all of this stuff. Then they get up and talk about the bill, and it's like they read something else.

It's like we're talking about two different bills. They're not being up front with people about what they're really up to. This is a problem.

It is the duty and the responsibility of the opposition and other people out there who are involved in environmental issues to let people know what is really happening. That is what the opposition is doing.

1740

I know, of course, that this bill has time allocation on it today and it will go through. I'm quite sure that the environmental groups, which I've often mentioned in this House in connection with other bills, will get involved if this government will finally sit down and listen to them and talk to them. I advise them to do so on this, because that's where we're at; we have to accept reality. They do have a majority, and this time allocation motion will pass today and then we'll go on and pass Bill 57. There you have it: That's where we'll be at.

The parliamentary assistant says they're going to consult in determining who's going to be exempted. I urge people who have concerns about this to get involved: to find out from the government and to make sure they're part of the consultation — and to make a very loud noise if they're not heard once again, not listened to once again.

The member for St Catharines said something that I think is extremely important when talking about deregulating environmental laws, that is, that the good corporate citizens out there do need an even playing field. The last thing they need is uneven regulation. As soon as you start opening it up and playing around with it and leaving it open to interpretation, with no inspectors out there, no enforcement officers, none of that stuff, when that all disappears, it's going to be very difficult for the good corporate citizens to keep spending the money they spend to improve environmental technology, to keep up with the times. It's going to be very hard when they're competing with bad corporate citizens who are there simply out to make a buck and will do it any way they can, and when they're not regulated in a fair, evenhanded way, they will take advantage of those holes in the law. And what will we have? We will have the standards that we had so many years ago that caused the environment and environmental protection to be such a growing concern in Canadian society.

There was a time several years ago, over the last 20 years, when the environment minister was considered to be one of the key and top ministers in the government. That has now changed. Again, if people, the public, who have so many other concerns on their minds, are not alerted to how badly and directly environmental protection has already, within two years, been hurt in this province, if people aren't aware of it, the government, sadly, will get away with it. To date, on the whole they have been getting away with it, and I find that extremely disturbing.

When a bill like Bill 57, which we're debating today, does pass, as will all the other deregulation bills in the hopper, with the ones that have already been passed, which my colleagues today outlined some of — there is so much that has already happened that will have, is starting to have a negative impact on environmental

protection and, yes indeed, our health. But we're not going to see the results tomorrow. There will be no dead bodies on the lawn tomorrow. Over time there is a greater incidence of cancer. We're seeing that with breast cancer and other cancers.

In fact, I got an all-party agreement in a private member's bill to put together a stakeholders' committee to start dealing with phasing out carcinogens, the chemicals — like copper, in fact — which build up in our food chain, if they're suspected to be contributing to the alarming rising incidence of cancer. We have to do something about it.

Those are the kinds of things that don't just jump out at you: higher rates of cancer, higher rates of illnesses. These kinds of things affect people's health, and the more you deregulate and let the corporate industrial polluters off the hook, the more health problems we'll have down the road, the more species will become extinct. We know that is a major problem; global warming, the greenhouse effect.

There are all kinds of — acid rain. They fired one of the most renowned acid rain experts in the world and said they didn't need him any more. We know that acid rain is still a very big problem and the insurance companies are getting very concerned about it. I hope perhaps the government will listen to them — they won't listen to me, they won't listen to the environmentalists — because they're very concerned about the costs and they're concerned in terms of weather change. These things have got to be looked at.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): How much did you spend on —

Ms Churley: What was that? I remember the member for Dufferin-Peel when he was the critic for the environment, and he was a good critic. He asked some very pointed and some very good questions to our government. He has completely changed. We don't hear him asking those questions any more. We don't hear him expressing concern to his own government about the kinds of cuts and deregulation they're engaged in. What he does now is sit in the House and heckle the environmental critics on this side of the House. You know, I just think that is not helpful. There are some really serious problems that are going to be a result of this bill, and some of them have been pointed out today.

The Environmental Compensation Corp: That one is just strange. That's just a straightforward saving of a few million bucks. That is an example of a little government agency that worked, and I find it very ironic that the reason they say they're getting rid of it is because they only paid out — what was it? — \$3 million a year or something and it costs a lot more to run it. Well, okay, if it costs too much to run it, find another way. Fold it into the existing ministry or something.

But it was successful. The fact that they kept the compensation payments so low meant that they were doing their job. It was a last resort. It was for private citizens who through no fault of their own lost financially because of some kind of spill or environmental problem on their land, perhaps poisoning their drinking water. We know some people came into the committee hearings and it was a very sad story. Their entire livelihood was wiped

out. They invested in I think it was a hog farm and the well water was poisoned.

They were in the environmental compensation process when this government decided to kill it. They came in and they were worried to death: "What's going to happen to us now?" They were here as a last resort and they said in committee that they started the process when our government was in power, through the Ministry of Natural Resources, I believe, and that they were made to go through all the hoops in trying to find out other ways to get compensated for their livelihood and their life savings being ruined. They were at a stage where all of that had been taken care of. It really was the last resort. What's going to happen to them?

That's what this compensation fund is all about. Is this what the government means when it says it wants to get government out of people's faces? I don't think that's what the people of Ontario thought when you used that phrase and the previous minister used it. I don't think they meant that you should let people, through no fault of their own, be left high and dry and be completely wiped out, their lives ruined. I don't think the fair people of Ontario think that's right either.

Why are you getting rid of a compensation fund that worked? It actually kept costs down. Now what are people going to do? Nothing. If they have that problem, and they will, after all, with the kind of deregulation that's going on — and I suspect I'm going to answer my own question here. Not only does it save a few million bucks a year, but they know there are going to be more and more of these cases because of the deregulation and the cuts to staff. There are going to be more spills, there are going to be more environmental problems, and they're not going to want to be in a position where they have to pay the money out, just like they've put forward in Bill 57 that people will not be able to sue the government. It's the same kind of thing. You're leaving these people high and dry.

1750

The OWMC is an interesting aspect of Bill 57 that often gets omitted in the critique. We all agree that it finished its work in terms of looking at going through the long EA process, trying to figure out what to do with industrial hazardous waste, but what the government continues to omit when they're talking about and bragging about getting rid of this useless government agency is that this agency was also mandated to look at ways of reducing industrial hazardous waste. That got thrown out. The baby was thrown out with the bathwater. Now there is no government policy whatsoever in that government to look at how to deal with hazardous waste. We all know that prevention should come first. That was the whole idea of the MISA program, which by the way they've also watered down, so to speak, so there are more pollutants going into our waterways again.

Those are two aspects of the bill which are not talked about a whole lot but are really problematic. When you combine what's going on with this bill, the kind of deregulation that's going to happen, with the cuts that have happened over the past two years, that take up pages and pages — of course, I'm just updating it. There's more to come. It just never stops.

I'm going to give you a few more recent cases. I talked about the Hydro coverup and the spills into Lake Ontario over 25 years, but some other things have happened recently. They overrode the authority of the Temagami local planning authority to give forest companies free rein. They've done that. They have, not once but twice, failed to show up in court to proceed with charges against Inco. Why was that? Was it because they didn't want to be there to prosecute Inco or was it because they didn't have the staff any more to send somebody to court? Not once but twice.

Then there was the Niagara Escarpment. My colleague from St Catharines, who has a keen interest in this subject, said that was just quietly transferred over to the Minister of Natural Resources because we accept that the Minister of Environment cared about the Niagara Escarpment, and we couldn't have that, could we? We couldn't have an environment minister who actually cared about some aspect of environmental protection stay there, because he might try to protect it against the government's wishes and against promises which were made to certain people in the election campaign.

One of the areas of great concern to me — when the previous minister, Brenda Elliott, the member for Guelph, was there we had quite a few questions in this House from me about bringing in a mandatory vehicle emissions testing program. It was put off and put off. Then the new minister came in and actually said to the public — let's see, I have the quote here — “We lose 1,800 Ontarians a year prematurely due to poor-quality air in the province.” Don't you think that's a bit of a crisis? We have a minister admitting that, and he continues to say he's going to try to do something about it. There's nothing yet. There are more voluntary programs, which our government started. We have the answers now. We know it's only a tiny part of the smog problem, but in cities like Toronto and in the Windsor corridor it's a huge, huge problem. Nothing has been done.

I know it's problematic. How do you deal with the lower-income people who may have to get their cars updated or whatever? These are problems that have to be dealt with, but of course this government doesn't want to deal with that aspect of it because they don't have the money to help people who may not be able to afford the upkeep of a car. But it's something that's got to be done. When you have a minister saying that 1,800 people die a year, this I think is a crisis.

This government, almost from the day it took office, started to attack environmental protection. They continue to get away with it because the public on the whole really doesn't know that much about what's going on. We talk about it time and time again in the House. I ask numerous questions, as does my leader. We get almost no responses that mean anything and nothing is happening, nothing is changing. They march ahead and continue to cut and deregulate and destroy over 30 years of environmental protection improvements by all governments. They have done more harm to the environment over two years than any other government, including the previous Tory government, the Bill Davis government, and any other since. It is shameful and it's going to hurt future

generations down the road. That is the legacy this government will leave.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The time for debate has ended. Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion 22. Is it the wish of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 15-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1757 to 1812.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time until recognized.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Barrett, Toby	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ross, Lillian
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Boushy, Dave	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Jim	Hudak, Tim	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Doyle, Ed	McLean, Allan K.	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fisher, Barbara	Newman, Dan	Villeneuve, Noble
Fox, Gary	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Froese, Tom	Parker, John L.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Pettit, Trevor	Wood, Bob

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Miclash, Frank
Boyd, Marion	Gerretsen, John	Morin, Gilles E.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Chiarelli, Robert	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Silipo, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wildman, Bud
Cleary, John C.	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len
Conway, Sean G.	McGuinty, Dalton	
Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Parkdale has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to the question given today on the Queen Street Mental Health Centre by the Minister of Health. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter. The minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. Please proceed.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I am delighted the Minister of Health is here to listen to the request.

The Minister of Health was being quoted not too long ago that he wants to shut down 253 psychiatric beds in the Metro area. We also know the hospital restructuring commission has recommended that four Ontario psychiatric hospitals should be shut. That of course puts extreme pressure on patients.

The first question I have for the minister is the following: Who will treat these patients when you have 253 beds being shut down and hospitals being closed? The pressure will be great. We know that right now there are a number of patients outside these hospitals. We are reminded that Mr Yu, who a few months ago was shot by Metro police, too was a patient. There are many more Mr Yu's out there who right now need help but are unable to get it because these psychiatric beds are not available at present, and when 253 psychiatric beds are being closed or shut down by this minister, the pressure will be there not to treat them. Who will treat these patients?

As it stands right now, patients are being pushed out and shut out. Two very recent cases come to mind, last week and the week before, where at the Queen Street Mental Health Centre a killer left on an open day pass, and just two days ago at the Whitby Psychiatric Hospital we had another person leave and he was charged with a number of very serious and grievous offences. We know what these offences are: robbery, sexual assault with a weapon, attempt to choke, forcible confinement, threatening death, and so on.

I am asking this minister, consequently, to institute what we term a public inquiry. That is different than what this minister has said he is going to do, namely, call for an investigation. An investigation could be private. It doesn't have to be public. An investigation could put the problem under the carpet and we would never know the truth of these charges.

In addition to the public inquiry, we will want to know how many patients at our psychiatric centres go AWOL every year. In the case of the psychiatric centre at 1001 Queen Street, the Queen Street Mental Health Centre, we know that last year the police were called over 300 times to find patients who had gone AWOL. Where do these patients go? Our police have to spend a lot of resources to find these patients, and are confined and are not looking after crime in the Metropolitan Toronto area. They become social workers.

These questions are of paramount importance. Consequently, I am asking the minister two questions today. First, is he going to institute a public inquiry, and when is he going to do it? Second, I invite him to come to the Queen Street Mental Health Centre with some other members of his government to see what takes place. We'd like to show the minister what in fact does take place. This area is close to Parkdale. The businesses are no longer viable. To me, it looks like a bombed-out area near that hospital.

We have to stand up today and say to this minister, "Is our present psychiatric model working?" If anyone from as far away as Halton has a mental health problem, where does that person end up? That person ends up at Queen

Street Mental Health Centre, from as far away as Halton. Then, because these psychiatric beds are now being restricted, they will be churned out and pushed into our community, where there are no significant aftercare services. Who will look after them? Our police department? Our ambulance workers? Our health care providers in hospitals? Those are the questions of relevance, and today I'm asking this minister to provide some answers.

The Acting Speaker: The parliamentary assistant has five minutes to respond.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to respond to the question this evening. Certainly, in the minister's response earlier today in question period, he indicated that he has already asked for an investigation into these matters for these two patients and, more important, to have a review of the indirect supervision policy, exactly what that means.

In general, the Ontario review board will have a look at psychiatric patients and determine the proper treatment for them: What's the proper level of care to help a recovery, or if that's not possible, what kind of security facility to have them in.

The minister and this government have already taken some very strong steps in terms of making the Ontario review board more accountable and stronger. Certainly the appointment of Justice Douglas Carruthers, a very highly respected and esteemed former justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, with a reputation for toughness, I might add —

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Good choice.

Mr Hudak: An excellent choice, and I think very much recognized across the justice and the psychiatric care communities.

Second, we've restored the policy to make sure that a judge heads up each one of these review boards. The NDP in their approach decided to take the judge out of it. The government's view is that that was a mistake, and with Justice Carruthers — we've appointed others: Justices McCombs, Labrosse and Watt — is restoring that tradition of having a judge as the chair of the ORB.

Finally, I'd say on the issue of security, it strikes me as somewhat strange that I have seen with my own eyes the member for Parkdale rise in this House on a relatively regular basis with a petition opposing the medium security, the double-locked ward at the Queen Street facility. If there is a patient with high risk who could go into that double-locked ward — let's get the issue straight here — if the member for Parkdale wants tougher security, why is he opposing the double-locked ward, the tougher security, the medium security there at Queen Street?

You can't be on both sides of the issue. He rises up to say he doesn't want the security at Queen Street in his riding, but today in the House he's on the other side of the fence and now he's saying: "We need tougher security. Look what has happened in my riding. We have to have facilities to make sure that these patients are locked up when the care comes."

I have a petition I think from May where the member himself says he's 100% behind this petition to make sure that we won't have this medium security, this double-locked security ward.

Mr Ruprecht: It's not working.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Please take your seat.

Mr Ruprecht: Don't you get it? You've got the locked cell now and it's not working.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Parkdale come to order.

Mr Ruprecht: Sorry, Mr Speaker, but I can't sit here and listen to this when it's not working.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, those are the rules. You have to. Either that or I'll eject you. Please bring yourself to order.

Mr Ruprecht: I wouldn't want to be ejected.

The Acting Speaker: Please get hold of yourself. The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara South.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm pleased that you were able to restore order. But the member could expect this sort of debate because if you're on two sides of an issue, you have to be called up to it at some time. I would say to the member for Parkdale, make up your mind. If you want tougher security, then why don't you back the double-locked, medium-security facility in the

riding? If you don't want the higher security, then how can you bring questions into the House demanding higher security?

As the expression goes, you can't suck and blow at the same time. That's what the member is attempting to do and that's why he's raising a lot of ruckus here in the House today. The fact of the matter is, I'd ask him to make up his mind. Do you want the tougher security there? If so, we're pleased for your support. If you don't, then don't go up on both sides. You have a petition one day saying you don't want it, and then you stand up and ask the minister a question in the House saying you do. Which one is it? We on this side are confused. We know we want that tougher security there at the Queen Street facility.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further subject to debate, I deem that the motion to adjourn has been made and carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1825.

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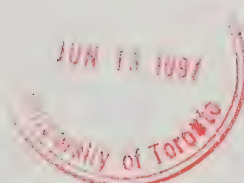
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Wednesday 4 June 1997

Mercredi 4 juin 1997

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Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 juin 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): Non-teaching personnel in school systems will be the first victims of this government's need to control the chaos being created by their plans to amalgamate school boards across the province. The Minister of Labour talks about encouraging local bargaining, but you don't encourage local bargaining by giving all the power to only one side, and that's what this new labour bill does. The minister talks about giving choices, but the choices all benefit the employer; the employees will have no voice at all.

Employers and employees can choose one of the contracts that currently exist to be the new contract for the amalgamated bargaining units, but what is the chance of both sides agreeing on which contract to choose? That is virtually a non-option.

If the two sides can't agree on accepting one of the existing contracts, they can agree to bargain for a new one, but right at the beginning of that process they have to decide whether to go to compulsory arbitration if the talks break down. The choice can be made by only one side, so the employer can unilaterally decide to suspend the union's right to strike. The government-appointed commissioners are then free to strip the contracts from anything that is in place now and the employees have no sanction power to stop them.

There is no chance here for local bargaining to be allowed to work, let alone encouraged, no need for both sides to agree to arbitration if the process breaks down. The government will say, "We didn't take away the right to strike, the school board employer did," and the school board again is caught in the middle because the government controls the dollars that will pay for any contract they settle locally. This government has imposed a war measures act and they created the war that made them do it. They haven't controlled the chaos ahead; they just created it.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Bill 99 is a piece of legislation that amends the Workers' Compensation Act. It is a backward step not just for injured workers, but as social policy as well.

The bill reduces the benefits of injured workers from 90% of net pay to 85%. The bill scraps the Occupational Disease Panel. The bill removes the independence of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal. The bill

declares that vocational rehabilitation is no longer the board's business. The bill reduces cost-of-living protection for almost all injured workers. The bill removes the word "fair" from the phrase "fair compensation." As though all of this was not enough, the WCB has reduced employer assessments by 5%. So there are going to be a lot of unhappy injured workers in Ontario.

The last time Tories were in power in this province, injured workers demonstrated angrily on the steps of this Legislature month after month after month. On one occasion they were literally banging on the doors of this very chamber. Now here we go again. What is it about Tories that they have so little respect for the work ethic that they punish those who get hurt adhering to that ethic? I hope that injured workers still have the energy, the leadership and the heart to once again take on the Tories and make their life miserable.

STUDENT MATHEMATICS COMPETITION

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): I congratulate the Sutton District High School math teams for moving to the top of the class in the University of Waterloo math contest.

The university sponsors math contests for the most capable math students across Canada. In each school, the students with the three highest marks in each grade automatically form the team. Sutton District High School's Caley, grade 10, and Fermat, grade 11, teams placed in the top half of all schools competing in their grade level.

The grade 10 team included Trisha Niemeyer, Doug Hall, Brian MacEachern, Robert Ruggiero, Bryan White and Marsha Wilson. You will note there are six students instead of three because of a four-way tie for third spot. The grade 11 team featured David Lapointe, David Sutherland and Peter Richards. All members of the grade 10 team and the top two on the grade 11 team also won certificates of distinction for placing in the top 25% of all students writing at their grade level.

The Pascal, grade 9, math students ranked at the 88th percentile, or ahead of 88% of competing schools. The grade 9 team included Shawn Gettler, Heather Pankhurst, Souling Chan and Amy Sue Littleford. It should be noted that Souling and Amy Sue tied for the third spot on the team.

Out of 34,000 contestants across Canada, Shawn Gettler tied for 276th place. Certificates of distinction were earned by Chris MacMillan and Neil Lewis.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I invite everyone in this House to join me today in acknowledging that we in

Ontario have set aside the month of June to celebrate our province's seniors. This month, let us recognize their contributions and continuing significance in our society. Let us assure ourselves that we are doing our part to respect their human dignity and quality of life.

It is most unfortunate that this government has failed in its responsibility to our senior citizens. Its track record is bleak: user fees on prescription drugs; drastic cuts to hospital care and budgets; unattended elderly patients in hospitals; longer waiting lists for long-term-care beds; downloading of social housing and ambulance services; rent control legislation and higher property taxes due to the government's downloading on to municipalities.

Yes, June is a time for all of us to celebrate how seniors enrich our lives. It is also a time for this government to extend its hand and give seniors the compassion, support and dignity they deserve. Mr Harris, ministers, stop hurting our seniors and give them the respect they so deserve.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I appreciate the cause today with respect to the ribbons, but in my ruling the ribbons were out of order. I would ask that they be removed. In the public gallery as well, if you're wearing a ribbon I would ask that it be removed.

The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I believe unanimous consent can be sought to permit those. As I understand those ribbons, they are a part of the anti-drunk-driving campaign, and I would seek unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I appreciate it, and you know what? I'll take that up in one second if I could. I just wanted to review my ruling, and I just asked the clerk to see if she could find it. I'll take your unanimous consent up in a moment, if you don't mind giving me that moment. Further statements?

SPECIALTY STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Since March of this year and the bankruptcy of Sammi Steel Inc of Korea, the parent company of Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland, there has been tremendous concern about the future of Atlas Specialty Steels. I tell you, and this government should know, that Atlas Specialty Steels is a major employer in regional Niagara and an essential component of Canada's steel manufacturing industry. The loss of Atlas Specialty Steels would be a major blow to the Ontario economy.

Now the Quebec government has moved swiftly to support the Tracy location of a sister plant to Atlas Specialty Steels, yet at the same time both this government of Mike Harris and the federal government have sat on their hands with respect to offering any assistance to ensure the ongoing operation of Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland.

I today call upon this government to respond to the expressions of concern that have been placed before it by myself and by representatives of those almost 900 women and men employed there to act quickly and immediately to get involved in the process to ensure a future for specialty steel manufacturing here in Ontario.

This government has an unfortunate habit of simply shrugging its shoulders and conceding to higher and higher unemployment and greater and greater poverty. I tell you, it's time for this government to act to ensure a future for Atlas Specialty Steels.

1340

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): It's my pleasure to announce to members of the House that once again the Stratford Shakespearean Festival is up and running. Monday, June 2, marked the official opening of the theatre's 45th season and many honoured guests enjoyed the evening of entertainment, including a fine performance of Camelot.

This momentous occasion is made all the more exciting in the newly renovated Festival Theatre. I'm happy to say the renovations have dramatically improved the theatre. Sight lines and acoustics have been augmented and aisle lights have been added. Downstairs seating width and legroom have been increased, while upstairs the balcony has been equipped with fully reconditioned but original seats.

Congratulations should go out to a number of people, including Richard Monette, the festival artistic director, and Senator Michael Meighen, the president of the board of governors for the festival. Their hard work and dedication to developing a world-class theatre have achieved an enviable goal.

This year the Stratford Festival will be offering theatre-goers the opportunity to see Camelot, The Taming of the Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, Oedipus Rex, Death of a Salesman, Little Women, Filumena, Equus, Richard III, Juno and the Paycock, Coriolanus and Wingfield Unbound.

As always, I encourage members of the Legislature and all others to come to the riding of Perth and share in the excitement of the Stratford Festival.

PREMIER'S COMMENTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I read with some amusement the front page of the Toronto Sun today wherein Premier Mike Harris was urging the unification of the Reform and Tory parties federally.

I wonder, does this mean that Premier Mike Harris supports Mr Manning's views on Quebec — views, I might say, that would only lead to the destruction of our national unity? They are divisive, they're mean-spirited and they lack compassion. Or does it mean that he supports Mr Charest's efforts to build bridges between the English and the French? Does the Premier now support and endorse those Reform candidates who openly berated visible minorities, or does he support Mr Charest, who, in an article in the Toronto Sun, called Mr Manning a bigot? Does the Premier now think that these two political parties are so similar that they should fly the same banner?

I don't think the finance minister agrees, because in the paper he openly supported Mr Charest on three occasions. One can hardly blame the finance minister, but I wonder about the Tory caucus. Does the Minister of Transporta-

tion agree with Mr Manning? Does the minister of consumer and corporate affairs agree with Mr Manning?

INCO STRIKE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Members of the Legislature will know that at midnight Monday night picket lines went up at Inco operations in Sudbury.

Some 4,700 workers in our community are now on strike. This has a serious impact in the Sudbury region. The direct Inco payroll to employees per week is in the order of \$5 million. This represents \$5 million which would normally circulate in our community to pay for mortgages, food, clothing, gasoline, household goods etc and now will not. This represents a substantial blow to the workers and families in our area.

Over and above that is the impact on contractors and businesses which supply goods and services to Inco. It's estimated that the financial blow to these individuals and businesses is another one third of the \$5 million paid out as wages to Inco workers. That results in an additional blow to our community.

Consider that financial loss to families against the profit that Inco made in the past two years. Between 1995-96 and in the first quarter of this year, Inco has made C\$500 million in profit. Last fall, both the CEO and the president of Inco received a \$500,000 wage increase. But in this contract Inco workers were not offered one penny in across-the-board-wage increases — not one penny.

The Conservative government and the Minister of Labour cannot ignore the situation. Yesterday, the union contacted the mediation officer and the company to get negotiations under way again. Today, I call on this Minister of Labour to contact Inco and urge the company to get back to the bargaining table. A positive solution can be found, but the company has to be a part of it.

STUDENT TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): This week I had an opportunity of being part of a telecommunications initiative between Israel and Ontario; more specifically, between Israel and the Durham Board of Education. I'd like to share with members some of the details.

A grade 10 geography class at Port Perry High School, students under the direction of their teacher, Mr Don Farquharson, did a study project this semester in geography. This project paired Port Perry High School students with students enrolled at Yad-Giora High School in Israel and conceived a parallel joint venture project for both students, planning events for both schools.

The final event of the project was a telecommunication link in partnership with IBM Canada where students from both schools presented their research and business plans to each other. This was a very special moment for the students from Port Perry High School, as well as the students from Yad-Giora High School, as it offered each of them the opportunity to exchange information using new technology and to demonstrate how much they have learned about each other's country and their culture through industry development projects.

This was a real example of the global village and the virtual classroom at work today. Dignitaries from both countries assembled at the Durham Board of Education and celebrated with the students the success of this project working together around the world, using the latest of technology.

I think this is one more achievement for the Durham Board of Education.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Transportation, I ask you to remove the ribbon until I seek unanimous consent, please.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Later today I will introduce legislation that targets some of the worst offenders on our roads: drinking drivers, suspended drivers, unsafe trucks, and people who pass stopped school buses.

One third of all fatalities on our roads still involve drinking drivers, and almost 70% of drinking drivers are repeat offenders. Ontarians will not tolerate drinking and driving. To prevent first-time offenders from offending again, they will have to undergo a mandatory education program. Repeat offenders will be assessed and must attend a mandatory treatment program. If they don't, they simply won't get their licence back. It is important to note that the offender, not the taxpayer, will pay for these programs.

As well, suspension periods will increase to three years for a second offender and to life for third-time offenders, which can only be reduced after 10 years if rehabilitation is successfully completed and ignition interlock is installed in the vehicle. Fourth-time offenders will never — I repeat, never — get a driver's licence again in Ontario.

As well, drinking-driving convictions will stay on a driver's record for a minimum of 10 years, up from five. If a person driving while under Criminal Code suspension gets caught, the vehicle they are driving at that time will be impounded roadside for 45 days. The suspended driver will face fines ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

We have in the House representatives from Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving and other organizations. Together, today we would like to wear a red ribbon in support of the removal of drinking drivers from our roads.

I would like to acknowledge Margaret Marland, MPP for Mississauga South, and John Baird from Nepean for their support and determination in bringing about these kinds of changes.

As I speak, our enforcement people are taking part in the three-day, North America-wide Roadcheck. They are inspecting vehicles and continue to take trucks and buses off our highways for such major safety defects as faulty brakes or cracked wheel rims.

1350

Now under this new legislation a truck that's found operating with a major safety defect will be immediately impounded for 15 days. That's in addition to the fines, which can go as high as \$20,000, and the points that will be added to their commercial vehicle operator's record. This measure is swift, targeted and applies to all trucks regardless of where they are from.

We did not conceive of the roadside suspension program alone. Representatives from government, the truck and bus industry, insurance companies, shippers and our enforcement officers came together and formed the group known as Target '97. Together they came up with a list of measures that will ultimately make our roads safer. The ministry will continue to work with industry to implement Target '97 recommendations.

There were many people involved, but two stand out for their leadership and cooperation. They are David Bradley, president of the Ontario Trucking Association, and Rudi Wycliffe from the Ministry of Transportation. It's people like them who have shown us that industry and government can work together and make things happen.

I said I would return with wheel separation legislation. This bill contains the Wheel Safety Act, word for word. We're getting tougher with the industry by making wheel separation from trucks and buses an absolute liability, an offence that carries a fine ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000.

I move on to bus safety. When a school bus is stopped and its red lights are flashing and the stop arm is out, the message to motorists is "Stop." With this legislation we are doubling the fines. Anyone convicted of a first-time offence for failing to stop for a school bus will be fined \$400 to \$2,000. Repeat offenders will be fined \$1,000 to \$4,000.

One life lost to a drinking driver is one life too many. One life lost because a truck wasn't properly maintained is one life too many. One child lost because someone passed a school bus when they shouldn't have is one life too many.

It would seem appropriate that during National Transportation Week we would introduce the toughest road safety measures in North America. This government has not worked in isolation to make these changes happen. This truly is a day when I'd like to say thanks and share the credit with a number of people. I would like to thank my former transportation critics, Mike Colle and Gilles Pouliot. We may sit on opposite sides of the House, but they have always recognized and been supportive of the need for safe roads. I am sure our current transportation critics, Dwight Duncan and Gilles Bisson, will be equally supportive in backing the bill so that no more lives are lost.

I want to thank Jill Hutcheon, John Hughes, Mike Weir and the staff at MTO for their ongoing support and hard work behind the scenes on this bill. Last but not least, I would like to thank my cabinet colleagues Bob Runciman, Jim Wilson, Charles Harnick, John Snobelen and Premier Harris for their support in making these changes possible.

It is thanks to your support that I am standing here today with these tough measures, and like you, Mr

Speaker, I believe that people in this province are worth it.

The Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold was seeking unanimous consent — I'm sorry it took so long; we were just checking with the ruling — to wear the red ribbons for today. Agreed? Agreed. I just want to say it means the members can wear the ribbons. You can't wear them in the galleries.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): The official opposition will vote in favour of this bill. We urge the government to bring it forward for second reading tomorrow and we urge the third party to withdraw its opposition day so that we can pass this bill by the end of June.

We are not inclined to wait until the fall. We believe public hearings can be held right away. We'd like to get on with it before the summer season starts. The initiatives around drunk driving are welcome and long overdue, and we support those.

I would like to say that the bill does not address most of the recommendations in Target '97, nor in the Worona inquest. The bill is a beginning. We can support and are prepared to support the provisions in the bill and are prepared to move to second reading tomorrow.

We also urge the government to have public hearings for a few days as quickly as possible. It could be negotiated among our House leaders. Let's pass this bill before the end of June. Let's not wait any longer. The province has been waiting a long time. We'll bring forward amendments to deal with all the issues that were contained in Target '97 that you haven't dealt with in this bill. We look forward to seeing the bill in its full copy.

I think it's only appropriate that my colleague from Essex-Kent, who forced the government to bring forward the bus legislation, has an opportunity to respond as well.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): We welcome this small step towards school bus safety, but we really wonder, if it hadn't been for the public pressure on this safety item, would you have done anything to protect the 810,000 children who ride our buses?

In your bill and in your statement you say you will raise fines, but that is not enough. We know through your staff that you have no intention of levying fines beyond \$400 because, as you state, it is a disincentive to the police.

Furthermore, in your statement today you say you will bring absolute liability as it pertains to the truck legislation. But you did not mention vehicle liability as it pertains to school bus safety. Vehicle liability is vicarious liability and we believe it is the only way to protect the children of Ontario as it pertains to school bus safety.

You say it is onerous — this from a government that has snitch lines, that snoops on WCB claimants and muses about fingerprinting every Ontario citizen. I find it ironic that you feel vehicle liability is such an onerous possibility to save our children here in Ontario.

The 16,000 buses and their drivers that travel our roads daily must have the tools to bring about convictions that will save the lives of children throughout the years to come. The public knows that vehicle liability is the only solution to protect our children here.

I say to the minister that I will support you in this very small step towards protecting our most precious cargo, the children who ride our buses throughout Ontario.

This is not only a rural matter; it is also an urban matter. The incidence of school buses being passed occurs at twice the provincial average here in Metro Toronto as it does in rural Ontario, so the bill has significance for all the citizens, all those parents, all those people who have had their children killed or injured. Far too many have suffered because of a vacuum within the law that doesn't allow the school bus drivers of this province the tools they need to identify those who are flagrantly breaking the law time and time again.

Minister, we will support you in this small step towards protecting the children of Ontario. Will you support Bill 78 to bring about the tools we need to make sure we have convictions? Bill 78 will not go away. Bill 78 is entitled An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act, and that it will stay. It will stay as long as I can continue to attempt to convince you to protect the children of Ontario.

1400

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): First of all, let me say that we are pleased to finally see the government's legislation in this area. After so much bombast and baffle-gab from the minister through the months of February, March, April and May, finally we see some truck safety.

But I have to ask a question. I note he gives credit to some members of the government caucus, but he doesn't refer to the government House leader, Mr Johnson. I hope you have Mr Johnson's support on it this time so that we can get it through the House. Last time you went out in the press and had lots to say without ever conferring with the government House leader. When he told you your legislation was not on, you got yourself into all kinds of problems, so I hope you have the government House leader's support this time.

I have some other questions. I know from my history in government that mandatory education, mandatory alcohol treatment and ignition interlock for repeat drunk drivers was being worked on very feverishly three years ago. What has happened that you're only bringing this forward now? What happened over the last two years? This is work that had been done in the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Transportation three years ago. Why did it take you two years to suddenly discover it and bring it forward? I think a lot of people need to have an answer to why it took you so long.

I have a few other questions about this. The Minister of Transportation is saying it may take a while to have this legislation passed. I want to say to the Minister of Transportation that our caucus has a section 125 motion in committee now dealing with truck safety. We'd be willing to waive that section 125 motion so that this can get to committee very early. There's your opportunity, Minister. If you want to get this to committee, if you want to have this legislation passed, we're quite willing to cooperate. Let's see how quickly you're ready to move here.

There are several other problems, however, with what the minister had to say today. The reality of this legisla-

tion is that this is legislation that has essentially been produced by the Ontario Trucking Association. There has been no public input up to this point. All those people out in the public who care about truck safety and who care about wheels falling off trucks have been shut out of the consultation process so far. This has been a consultation process strictly between this government and its friends in the trucking industry, its friends at the Ontario Trucking Association. When is the public going to be involved? When are you going to open the doors of democracy and allow the public to be involved in this very important public safety legislation?

Secondly, as I heard the minister speak and as we've had a chance to review what's going on, this government still doesn't realize that transportation trucks are not simply big cars. The minister needs to recognize that we have special rules dealing with trains, that we have special rules dealing with planes in terms of how they're used in transportation. This government still doesn't quite get it in terms of truck safety.

Finally, there are some things in the legislation that we think step back, not ahead. For example, the government says they're going to have self-auditing. If it's a question of self-auditing, we think that's a step back. Self-issuance of oversize permits: The industry is going to issue itself oversize permits. I don't think that's a step ahead. Finally, this government is going to allow longer combination vehicle permits. What does that mean? It means allowing single-axle tractors to pull a second trailer. It means allowing a truck to pull three 28-foot trailers. And this government says that's going to promote truck safety?

This government is trying to advertise this as truck safety, but when you read between the lines, there are a lot of conditions here that will militate against truck safety, will militate against public safety on the highway. We're getting used to that with this government; another spin effort.

There are many things here that need to be examined. Bring the legislation forward and let's get it —

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): As we fast approach the second anniversary of this government's mandate and of the Common Sense Revolution —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Your question is to?

Mr Cordiano: I have a question for the Deputy Premier. On Monday, the people of Ontario sent a message to you and your government's policies. They said no to your extreme right-wing agenda. Make no mistake, the message was clear. They said no to your Common Sense Revolution. They said no more cuts to seniors, no more cuts to the disabled, but clearly this government hasn't listened, because you slapped on \$225 million more in user fees through the drug benefit plan. Your government is forcing some seniors to choose

between paying for groceries or paying for drugs. When you talk to seniors, how can you look them in the eye and say you really care about what happens to them?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I'd be happy to refer this question to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I would like to advise the member opposite that there has been a considerable amount of consultation going on with seniors in this province. In the pre-budget consultation they indicated their concern for the rising cost of drugs generally in this province, the rising utilization factor. They also understand that in all of North America the lowest cost for low-income seniors for those drug plans is here in Ontario. But the lowest-cost drug plan in North America is also the most costly plan for taxpayers. We spend over \$1 billion to maintain this world-class infrastructure for our drug program and that is a considerable cost to taxpayers as well. We believe this program we've implemented is responsible in that regard.

Mr Cordiano: The fact is that things aren't just getting bad for seniors, they're also getting bad for the disabled in this province. You're about to change the definition of "disabled" and cut even more people off. The story is not any better for children and their education. Your cuts to education have been devastating: 25 boards have had to cancel junior kindergarten; 23 boards were forced to reduce special education programs; numerous boards have been forced to cut libraries, transportation and even custodial services; and classroom sizes are getting too large. Our young people are being denied the chance to have a post-secondary education because of huge tuition fee increases. This is the sad state of affairs in Ontario.

Deputy Premier, how can you tell students, parents and teachers that things just got better for them in Ontario as a result of your election on June 8, 1995?

Hon Mr Jackson: Given that the —

Mr Cordiano: I want the Deputy Premier to answer that one.

Hon Mr Jackson: I appreciate that you directed it, but it has been directed. I simply want to mention to the member opposite that if you sit down with the seniors of this province, who made all the necessary contributions to our community and to our province, you will find out that these people made priority settings to ensure they delivered the kinds of programs they wanted for their families: a mortgage, a roof over their heads, food on their table, and saved for a health system. Seniors made those kinds of decisions.

When we inherited this government, with a \$100-billion accumulated debt, we did what seniors did during tough times. We set priorities. When we set those priorities, everybody shared, and in the process of sharing, we were able to deliver better quality services at less cost. That's what the seniors did for the last century in this province.

The Speaker: I'll just let the minister responsible for seniors know that you may direct the next question or that question if you like. It doesn't necessarily mean it can be directed just once.

1410

Mr Cordiano: Mr Speaker, he should direct the next question because he's out to lunch. He didn't answer my question. You can't tell students and parents that they haven't been affected by your cuts. None of you can do that. The facts speak for themselves.

Let's go on with this sorry Tory story. Let's talk about your miserable job creation record. The Common Sense Revolution promised 725,000 new jobs. You're 165,000 jobs behind your midterm target. Meanwhile, unemployment is higher, more people are out of work.

The list goes on: cuts to law enforcement, cuts to the environment, to culture, to the north. Then there's the big whopper. Mike Harris said, "It is not my plan to close hospitals," yet everywhere you turn in this province, somehow every community is facing the loss of their community hospital. Ontario has had enough, Deputy Premier.

Minister, when are you going to realize that you and your Common Sense Revolution are leaving behind a very sad legacy in this province?

The Speaker: Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon Mr Jackson: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for your ruling as well. I'll direct to the Deputy Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's be clear: It wasn't a ruling. You had an option. Deputy Premier.

Hon Mr Eves: I thank you for clarifying that point, Speaker.

With respect to employment, the question last asked by the honourable member, I would like to point out to him that in the months of March and April alone there were over 60,000 net new jobs created in Ontario. That's 1,000 jobs a day, net new jobs, created in the province of Ontario.

Seeing as how the honourable member is extrapolating and using numbers which he finds convenient, he also forgot in his preamble to his question to point out that there are more people working in Ontario today than ever before in the province's history. The unemployment rate in the province is indeed coming down. Are we happy with where it is? Absolutely not. But the Ontario economy is performing better than any other economy in Canada, with the possible exception of the province of Alberta. Every private sector forecaster, the Royal Bank, everybody, projects that Ontario will indeed be creating substantial jobs over the next two years. They say a minimum of 300,000 —

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, thank you very much. New question, official opposition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): My question is also to the Deputy Premier on behalf of the Premier. Seven organizations held a press conference here less than an hour ago. They want to know why your government has taken, unwarranted, \$30 million from this province's seniors, and they want that answer from you today. They want to know why.

They question, in the first place, why on July 15 last year you made them start paying user fees on prescription

drugs — 926,000 seniors, many of them at great hardship. That was bad enough. A \$100 deductible had to be paid, and hundreds of dollars paid additionally for the individual prescription costs. But then on April 1 of this year, after only eight and a half months, you forced these same seniors to pay again. If you were in business with that kind of activity, it would be called fraudulent behaviour.

Minister, we want to know: How dare you do this to seniors?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for York South, I think you crossed the line by accusing the member of fraudulent —

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): It's business talk.

The Speaker: It may be business talk; it's just not parliamentary talk. It's out of order, to the member for York South. You must withdraw.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, I'm happy to withdraw, because —

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been put. Deputy Premier.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): This indeed is a question about seniors and I refer it to the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I have informed the member opposite and members in this House on several occasions that when the Ontario drug benefit plan adjustments were discussed they were shared with the citizens of Ontario back in November 1995. The original date set for implementing that was going to be April 1, 1996. We had difficulties — I've informed members of the House — getting tax information from the federal government and determining the threshold between low-income seniors and non-low-income seniors. When we were slated to begin on June 1, we had an OPSEU strike in this province, and that's why the date of July 15 was finally set for implementation.

In all the correspondence, if you asked a pharmacy for any information from this government, if you telephoned a ministry hotline, you were informed that the program period would be till April 1.

Mr Kennedy: Well, this is the information sent out by the government. It says July 15 and it says it's good for one year. Here today are seven organizations that didn't want me to direct the question to the minister responsible for seniors because he's not being responsible for seniors. He won't even respond to their letters. They were shocked when they found on April 1, like Iris Johnson did, that they had to pay another \$100; \$93.73. She was shocked. She almost didn't take a prescription home, thanks to the way you guys are conducting the program.

Minister, they've given you a deadline. By June 18 they want an answer. Will you and your government give back three and a half months' credit to the seniors? You've dipped into their pockets, you've ripped them off. You talked earlier this month about Seniors' Month, about fraudulent financial abuse of the elderly. Will you stop yours? Will you give those three and a half months back to Ontario's seniors?

Hon Mr Jackson: This government consulted widely with seniors. In fact, there were seven different seniors'

organizations that met with the Treasurer and myself to discuss issues of concern to seniors. The issue of the copayment and the \$2, the lowest in North America, was discussed at that time.

They acknowledge the growing costs associated with the drug plan for the citizens of Ontario. They made a specific request of this government that it sit down with seniors as consumers, sit down with pharmacists who do the dispensing, sit down with physicians who make the decisions about how many prescriptions will be written in this province, and seniors made a legitimate appeal to this government to treat them as consumers at that round table to discuss those solutions.

Yesterday in the House in response to a question we indicated clearly that there are a series of issues which they themselves have expressed as major concerns. But one thing is for sure: Seniors are concerned that they get access to the leading edge drugs and that they have access to those —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, official opposition.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Yesterday, with so much fanfare, you announced June is Seniors' Month. I'll just read a couple of short quotes: "It's a time to reflect on the policies and priorities which are implemented on behalf of seniors and the challenges we face as a province," and the effects this will have on our seniors' lives.

Minister, you've already had two opportunities to answer the same questions and I'm going to ask you once again: Will you commit today to the seniors of Ontario to reimburse the three and a half months or make sure that the 12 months in a year — not eight and a half months — will commence on July 15 and not April 1, 1998?

Hon Mr Jackson: This government will continue to consult with seniors and we've indicated that very clearly. We've indicated that to the United Senior Citizens and other organizations. This government has made some very important strategic decisions about the health care needs of Ontario citizens, and it invites a very interesting comparison. I recall sitting in opposition when the Liberal minister, then Elinor Caplan —

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): You're ripping them off.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, please come to order.

Mr Sergio: Since when does a year have eight and a half months?

The Speaker: Member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: You're right.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mr Jackson: This government has made a very important decision because it has added 460 new drugs to the Ontario drug formulary, drugs for which in previous years senior citizens were required to go into their own pockets and pay the entire cost and for the cost of dispensing that drug. In fact today in Ontario, by modernizing and updating this system, we are putting drugs on the market as fast as we can for seniors to access at \$2 per prescription. I remember when Elinor Caplan held up the formulary for an entire year. There isn't one drug on a waiting list in Ontario and we put 460 new drugs —

Interjections.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

1420

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the government House leader. It concerns the conflict-of-interest position of this government and the conflict of interest of civil servants who work for this government and their relationship with some of the government's private sector friends.

On April 23 you stood in this House and announced your intention to bring in a lobbyist registration law. You said the law was to include restrictions on senior bureaucrats and political staff moving from government to organizations with which they had had significant dealings within the previous 12 months. Another part was to prohibit people who work on government tenders switching to the other side after the tender is negotiated.

I've got a copy of the May issue of Canadian Casino News. On page 2 it says that the Navegante Group, which runs Casino Niagara, has hired Domenic Alfieri. Mr Alfieri negotiated a contract with them less than eight months ago. Now he's working for them. Where's your legislation —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): We have brought in conflict-of-interest guidelines in addition to lobbyist registration. If there is a case in point, then the matter will be referred and can be referred to the Integrity Commissioner and reviewed.

Certainly the government is most concerned about conflict-of-interest situations. The government has embarked on a series of initiatives to restore some financial integrity to the province to ensure that services are properly delivered, possibly through privatization, through alternative services, but we must ensure the integrity of the system. If the member has some specific information, I'd be happy to receive it and ensure that it's properly pursued.

Mr Hampton: I can already see that we're into situations here where the opposition has to catch the government, but that's not what you said back in April. You said, "Taxpayers have the right to know that dealings undertaken by the government will serve to advance the public interest." You said you were going to introduce legislation to ensure that happens.

Here are the facts, Minister: As of August 1, 1996, Domenic Alfieri signs a contract with Navegante Group Inc, Navegante Corp of Canada, to manage Casino Niagara. The contract is worth, at a minimum, \$4 million. On March 31, 1997, Alfieri goes over to be an adviser to the Navegante Group. On April 23 you stand in the Legislature and say you're not going to allow this, that you're going to introduce legislation to stop it.

Minister, where is your legislation to stop these kinds of conflicts to ensure the public interest is protected?

Hon David Johnson: We are very concerned that the public interest be protected. The member opposite has indicated a particular individual, and I'm not going to get into particular cases here, and has quoted the date of March and indicated that I stood in this House in April and that the government is in the process of bringing in conflict-of-interest guidelines, lobbyist registration.

It is certainly our intent that they be enforced as of this point in time. It sounds as if the information the member is bringing forward is before April, pertains to a date in March, but I'd be very happy to see the information he has and have it investigated and simply determine if there has been any sort of conflict, any wrongdoing, any impropriety and that the public interest be protected.

Mr Hampton: You stood in this Legislature and you didn't talk about guidelines. You talked about legislation that was going to protect the public interest, that was going to ensure that people who work in your government and work out deals with the private sector can't then go over to that private sector corporation, into a sweeter environment. That's what you said: legislation.

Minister, this is the crux of the problem: Your government has also set up an extensive privatization process; many government services, including some right here in the Legislature, have already been privatized, yet these privatizations have gone ahead without any safeguards in terms of conflict of interest or in terms of protecting the public interest. The question is, how can taxpayers be sure they're really getting the best deal? How can we be sure you aren't working out sweetheart deals with some of your friends in the private sector?

The Speaker: The question, please.

Mr Hampton: How can we be sure that political staffers and civil servants who work out these privatization deals aren't then going to go over to the private sector and benefit from them? Where is your legislation to protect the public interest, and if you bring it in, is it going to be —

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Government House leader.

Hon David Johnson: I am informed that the Ontario Casino Corp is not involved with the RFP for charity gaming clubs and that the individual involved, who was mentioned, apparently, by the leader of the third party, had no involvement with the RFP released by the GCC.

However, the main message I want to convey is that this government has taken this whole situation seriously. This government is going to bring forward legislation with regard to lobbyist registration. This government is bringing forward guidelines with regard to conflict of interest. This government has set up the Integrity Commissioner to review these cases, to ensure a transparency in this whole process, to ensure that there are no improprieties, to assure the public that there's no wrongdoing.

Did the previous government do this? Did they bring in any guidelines? Absolutely not. Did the Liberal government, when they had an opportunity, bring in any guidelines? Absolutely not. This government has taken it seriously. This government is proceeding in that direction.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: I have a question to the Minister of Labour on a similar matter. But I would say to the government House leader, I guess we're going to see the legislation after your sweetheart deals with your private sector friends have all been worked out.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION
APPEALS TRIBUNAL

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Labour, my question concerns democracy and respect

for democratic processes and respect for independent quasi-tribunals and the fact that you are now packing the Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal with people who know nothing about workers' compensation but who are generous contributors to the Conservative Party.

We understand that you are firing Ron Ellis, the chair of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, because he objects to your appointments. He objects to replacing people who know something about workers' compensation with partisan Conservative hacks who know nothing about workers' compensation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The question, please.

Mr Hampton: How can people have confidence in fair decisions from quasi-judicial tribunals like WCAT when you are packing them with partisan —

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would simply say that Mr Ellis has had an opportunity to serve the tribunal now since its inception. He is to be commended for the work he has done. As in any other organization, there comes a time for change, and it was mutually decided that Mr Ellis would be replaced by a very competent individual who has also been there since the start.

Mr Hampton: The minister tries to ignore the question and tries to spin off in some other direction. The fact of the matter is, Ron Ellis is being moved out because he disagreed with your attempts to pack a quasi-judicial independent tribunal with partisan political appointments who know nothing about workers' compensation.

Let me give you an example. One of the people you have announced you are appointing is a Kenneth Dechert of Ancaster. Listen to his qualifications that you list: He is a lawyer. He was a crown prosecutor in the past. He is a past president and member of the Hamilton Men Teachers' Choir. He's a past secretary of the Rotary Club of Hamilton. What you didn't mention is that he is a generous financial contributor to the Conservative Party. Nowhere does he have any knowledge, any experience, any background in the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal.

1430

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Hampton: Would you tell us, how are people going to get fair decisions from partisan political appointments who know nothing about the field of injured workers, job injuries —

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Minister of Labour.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I feel very confident that the appointments we are making are individuals who are able to make decisions regarding appeals that come to that tribunal. I would just say to you that all of these individuals have a respect for injured workers. They will understand the system and they're going to be able to make decisions. As decisions have been made in the past, they will continue to be made by looking at all of the circumstances surrounding the situation.

Mr Hampton: The minister can try to put a positive spin on this. The reality is —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Who was up? Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I want to say thank you to the Clerk's table for helping the Speaker out here.

Minister, I don't think you understand the gravity of the situation. In a democratic society, courts and quasi-judicial tribunals that behave like courts have to be independent. If democracy is going to work, these bodies have to be independent. They have to be able to make fair decisions without political influence.

You are packing this body, which is like an appeals court, with partisan political appointments who know nothing about the subject area of workers' compensation. This strikes at the heart of democracy. It strikes at the heart of fair decision-making. It strikes, frankly, at the heart of the whole judicial process.

What are you going to do to ensure that we have fair judicial processes, that democratic process is respected and that democracy is respected in terms of how these decisions are reached?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Let me take this opportunity to again commend Mr Ellis for his years of service to WCAT. Let me also take this opportunity to indicate that his replacement has 12 years of dedicated service to the tribunal. I certainly have every confidence that the individuals we are appointing to WCAT are eminently qualified to make the decisions that are necessary and to take on those responsibilities. I think your problem is that you were so used to making political appointments when you were in office, now you're questioning everything we do.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Tomorrow you'll be introducing legislation which will change the way social services will be delivered across Ontario. So far your performance in dealing with people who need help has been less than stellar. In the Common Sense Revolution, you clearly stated, "Aid for...the disabled will not be cut." I'd like you to make one promise today. Could you please stand in the House and say that not one person with a disability will be cut?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, the honourable member may wish to check her facts. I'm not introducing legislation tomorrow. Second, all those who are eligible for disability support in this province get that support now and will continue to get that support in the future.

Mrs Pupatello: The Common Sense Revolution said, "Aid for...the disabled will not be cut." Your predecessor, the minister sitting next to you, will remember well when you made massive cuts to the system last year. When you realized, after we pointed it out to you, that thousands of those with disabilities were also cut, your minister stood in the House and had to apologize because he had made such a grave error. We all remember that, as do those with disabilities.

Minister, we know you're busy drafting this legislation. We anticipate that it's coming in very soon. We would

like you to make one promise in the House today, and that one promise is simple: that not one person with a disability will be cut. Will you please make that promise today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, people who are eligible for disability support in this province get it today; they will get it in the future. That has not changed. What we are proposing to change is a system that prevents people with disabilities from achieving what they want to achieve. We have a system that has arbitrary rules that force people with disabilities to be reassessed constantly, whether they need it or not. We have a system that wastes money on administration, when they should be taking that money —

Mrs Pupatello: You cut them off last year, Minister. *Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Windsor-Sandwich, Kingston and The Islands, and Hamilton East, come to order. I'm warning you, and I'm not going to warn you again.

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, I know she has only had one briefing from my officials in the ministry. I'm very well prepared to continue that briefing process. It might be of assistance during this discussion.

Under the current program, people with disabilities are right now forced to rely on welfare. That program does not work very well for someone who needs income support perhaps for the rest of their life. We've been listening to what people with disabilities have been saying. They've been saying it for many years. Unfortunately, that party when it was in government did not respond; neither did that one. We are going to be doing what they have recommended to us needs to be done.

The Speaker: New question; third party.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the same minister and it follows on this issue.

Interjections.

Mrs Pupatello: They won't be happy with that back home, fellas.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): *Remarks in Italian.*

Mrs Pupatello: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would suggest that members of the House use the English language. If it's going to be addressed to me in another language, I don't think it's appropriate in this House.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): French or English.

Mrs Pupatello: English or French, but Italian is not allowed.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, please. The member for Windsor-Sandwich is correct: It is English or French; Italian isn't allowed. I didn't hear what the member said, but —

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): It was out or order in any language.

1440

The Speaker: Agreed, and even if I did hear what he said, I'm not sure I would know what he said. All I can ask the members opposite — and I know it was the member for Ottawa —

Mrs Pupatello: Just ask him to withdraw it, Speaker, please.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Sandwich, I appreciate it. I can only say to you, I don't know what the member for Ottawa-Rideau said. I could ask him to speak only in English and French. If he said anything inappropriate, I ask him to withdraw it if he likes.

Mr Guzzo: I meant it as a compliment, but if the member finds it offensive, I'm happy to withdraw it.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Ms Lankin: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services and it follows on the previous question. Minister, I understand the arguments you've put forward already about establishing a new program and I essentially agree with those. What I would like to talk to you about, though, is the definition of "disability" and who will become eligible, because that's what disabled people are concerned about right now.

About 140,000, or 80% of those who are currently on family benefits, are —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Beaches-Woodbine, just a moment. I'd ask the members to come to order. The member for Ottawa-Rideau, I don't know what you said, but I've got to say that if it wasn't parliamentary I'll report back, because I don't think it's necessary to say things that are out of order. You say it's a compliment. Well, if I find out what it is, I'll come back and ask you to withdraw it at that time. I give the member for Windsor-Sandwich that undertaking. Member for Beaches-Woodbine, you can start again.

Ms Lankin: I'm going to try one more time to get through this question. Minister, the concern is, under your new program, the definition of "disability" and the criteria for eligibility for that, because members of the public who are persons with disability are very concerned that those who currently qualify or those who have similar disabilities to those who currently qualify will be excluded in the future. We're talking currently about 140,000 people, or 80% of the family benefits caseload.

Today there was a press conference and people who deal with those in poverty and those on social assistance have raised these concerns and they've raised examples. There was a woman who talked about her heart and lung problems and how she has worked for over 30 years and she thinks she could be the type of person who would be forced off. She says: "If I was forced off FBA on to GWA, I could only participate in workfare on the days when my breathing was not too bad and my heart was not acting up. Who decides that?" — this is the critical question — "And would I still be eligible for assistance?" What is the answer to that question, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: To the honourable member, I appreciate her concern and if she's relying on the information that was released, as I understand it, at the press conference this morning, I can understand why she would be concerned. Unfortunately, and I did advise them of this last week, they may wish to check their information. They're wrong on the definition they're saying we're using; it's one we threw out last year. They're wrong on the numbers they are using and they're also wrong on what we intend to do.

Specifically, the answer to the question the honourable member has asked as to who should make these decisions, the people who should make these decisions are qualified professionals who understand the needs of those with disabilities. What they need is a program that will allow people with disabilities to have the support they need, and those who can and want to and are able to work also need the supports in order to get jobs and to keep jobs. That's another very clear message we've heard from groups representing the disabled.

Ms Lankin: Minister, I would agree with you that is the message we've heard. Here's the rub in all of this: At this time there are people who would have been determined to be eligible for disability benefits in the past who are currently being rejected, before you've even changed any eligibility rules.

We have examples of people in the Durham area, and I want to quote from your report to Durham council where it says, "There appears to be a very concerted effort by provincial government to reduce as many people from disability pension, Gains-D, as possible." They talk about how the new process will have minimal investigation, and completed applications will be handled by mail — no human contact; not the kind of response you're talking about, about those dedicated, qualified individuals.

It appears that the government is already tightening up eligibility to disqualify people who would have been eligible for disability benefits. There are no jobs out there for these people to go to. The supports you're talking about are not in place. Minister, what are these people to do? Will you look into this allegation that you are already tightening up eligibility criteria?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With all due respect to the honourable member, if the author of that particular report she's referring to paid more attention to what the government is actually doing instead of making those inaccurate and wrong, highly misleading and, I would suggest, inflammatory comments in that report, he may well be serving the people he is supposed to be helping a little better than what he appears to be doing in making those allegations, as he did some time ago. It's a very old report.

The member is quite right that there are jobs that people with disabilities cannot get because they don't have the supports they need to get the jobs and to keep the jobs. That's one of the reasons we are bringing in a new employment supports program for people with disabilities, so they can indeed do that.

The honourable member is right. They have clearly said this time and time again to her previous government, to that government, to our government. We intend to act on that because we believe that people with disabilities are capable of achieving much more. What they need are the supports from the government in order to be able to do that.

The Speaker: I would ask the member for Ottawa-Rideau: I've had three interpretations of what you said. I don't know how anyone could consider that a compliment and I would ask that you stand and withdraw, please.

Mr Guzzo: I have withdrawn, thank you, and I'll take the opportunity to do it again.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, recently you came to Hamilton and met with several people in my community and we talked about environmental issues. It was a good opportunity for us to talk about sustainable development and to emphasize to you how hard we've worked in our community towards sustainable development and the fact that we are one of only 10 communities across the world, to be recognized in Vision 2020 as a sustainable community.

We talked a lot about air quality as well. Minister, yesterday you were in Windsor and made an announcement about a student-led air quality project for students across the schools in Ontario. I wonder if you could tell this House a little bit about that initiative.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Yesterday I met with some very bright young students from Riverside high school in Windsor. We are putting forward a brand-new program called Partners in Air. Starting this fall, the program allows high school students to monitor local air, take tests and put the results on their own Internet Web site.

Partners in Air represents a real breakthrough in getting public involvement in this part of the environment. This initiative will encourage high schools to develop scientific and environmental solutions. Guidelines will be provided to ensure consistency in the way information is collected.

Through Partners in Air, students will be learning about smog, its effects, and how to address those problems. Partners in Air will augment data which the Ministry of Environment already collects. Partners in Air is expected to be in as many as 15 high schools across this province by this fall.

Mrs Ross: The minister is correct: Students are keenly interested in the environment. As a matter of fact, I would say that students today are more interested in the environment than they were many years ago.

I think this is an exciting program. I hope schools in my community will take part in this project and I encourage them to do so.

I understand also that the private sector will be involved in this program. I wonder if you could please give us more information on this project.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm amazed by the reaction of the opposition, not wanting to get young people involved in the whole issue of air quality in their own community.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Hold on. Let's let the minister get his response in, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: Right now we have been meeting with a number of private sector sponsors who would love to get involved in this program and help pay for this program, help pay for some of the testing which is required as a result of the students collecting samples. The reason this problem involves industrial partners is to ensure its long-term sustainability as well as making certain that the program becomes widely known throughout the community, where many of these corporate sponsors already are involved in business.

I believe that this particular program is a unique partnership between our education system, the teachers who are very enthusiastic about it, the young students who are quite anxious to learn about this, put their results on the Internet, and of course the citizens of these communities. I believe it's a real win-win situation for everyone.

1450

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. It relates to the introduction of the bill you brought in yesterday that will make sweeping changes to the way disputes are resolved in this province.

You said, "By creating greater incentives for the parties to settle disputes themselves, this new process will protect taxpayers against unnecessary disruptions of public services...." I ask, incentives for whom? Is this going to be incentives for all parties? I suggest to you that the incentives will be there for the administrators, they'll be there for those who are running the school boards, they'll be there for the municipalities, but at the expense of the employer groups.

You haven't consulted widely with all the stakeholders in this. If you had, you might have received some different suggestions and some different ways of tackling this. Your government has created chaos and now you provide a mechanism to try not to deal with it. Will you consult with those groups before you implement the legislation? If you have already, please name some of them.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Yes, we introduced new legislation yesterday which is going to facilitate restructuring as it takes place in the next few years in the public sector: the hospitals, the municipalities and the school boards.

As we drafted the legislation, we had an opportunity for consultation. We consulted with the construction industry and we determined that any of the issues relating to the construction industry would be referred to them so that they could determine their own outcomes.

We have also had an opportunity on two occasions to meet with CUPE. We were well aware of the fact that they did not want us to strip collective agreements, to override agreements. They indicated they did not want the elimination of successor rights; they did not want to make sure that contracting out would be a possibility. You can see in the legislation we introduced that we did respond.

There is no override of any collective agreement; there is no stripping of any collective agreement; we did not eliminate anybody's successor rights; and we have not made possible contracting out. What we have here is a process that still encourages and enables the parties to negotiate the first contract after amalgamation.

Mr Patten: But you have stripped them of that, because only one party out of two has the right to call jeopardy, or whatever the term is that you want to use. Then they go before arbitration and they're stuck with those decisions.

There's a pattern here. We've got hospital restructuring, we've got the so-called Education Improvement Commission, we've got commissions for the municipalities, and all these commissions are arbitrary bodies, people who were not elected, people who were appointed by your government. Their decisions are supposedly final. They are not accountable in any particular way. These are bodies that will make judgements on elected representatives, be they trustees, municipally elected councillors etc. You're telling me this is going to encourage people to resolve situations in an amicable way.

I ask you: Will you commit yourself to full hearings on this legislation so we can hear from the over 700,000 people in this province who will be affected by this piece of legislation?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I have a tremendous amount of confidence in people in the province who are going to be involved in these negotiations. If you take a look at the past couple of years, there were dire predictions that there would be numerous strikes. We have not seen that materialize. I believe that people in this province, whether it's employers or employees, are basically committed to working out the differences and determining their own outcomes.

Yes, I commit to you that there will be full public hearings. We will travel the province, we will be in Toronto and we will listen.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd just like to take this opportunity to introduce in the Speaker's gallery the previous member for Willowdale, Mr Gino Matrundola. Welcome.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the minister responsible for native affairs. As the minister is aware, later today in this House we will be debating a New Democratic Party motion that takes notes of the widespread concerns in the province about the events leading to the tragic death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995.

We know this isn't a partisan issue. We know there are a lot of questions that members of this House, not just members of this party or the Liberal Party but also of the government party, want answered and that many people across the province want answered. Will the government allow all members, Conservative MPPs as well as obviously opposition members, a free vote on the resolution this afternoon to be able to vote their conscience after hearing the debate?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I would agree with the member opposite that the incident at Ipperwash was a tragedy. The government has been clear in the answers we've given dealing with issues that have been raised in this Legislature in terms of court cases that are presently pending before courts. We think that making any decisions while those situations exist would be premature and wrong, and certainly it is the way of this party and has

been since I've been sitting here, to be able to vote as we like on these issues, and I'm sure that will continue today.

Mr Wildman: I'm glad to hear that. This motion, as it is worded, does not criticize the government. It is not a matter of confidence. It relates to the concern of many MPPs that there be genuine debate in this House about issues that are really important to the people of the province. We know that many people on the Conservative side of the House as well as the opposition side desire to see the full truth come out of the events at Ipperwash and that we want a public inquiry into those events.

It seems like a perfect opportunity for a free vote, where members can put their position on the record and not simply follow party lines in this House. Will the minister declare categorically now that today's vote on the motion dealing with the events at Ipperwash is a free vote without any effort to whip Conservative members to follow a government line?

Hon Mr Harnick: As I indicated a moment ago, it would be premature to make decisions about matters that continue to be before the courts. As the motion relates to making determinations in that regard, I would say that's wrong. Certainly that will guide me in the way I vote, and I think others should consider that as well. It's quite obvious that cases continue to be before courts and those cases should be completed.

1500

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is for the Minister without Portfolio responsible for privatization. On April 28 this year you announced the Ontario privatization review framework and the first government entities or services to be reviewed under that framework. One of the first candidates is the St Williams Tree Nursery, located in my riding of Norfolk.

St Williams Tree Nursery was established in 1908. It was the first nursery to be established in the province and has stood as a monument to soil conservation and reforestation. It is the birthplace of more than a quarter of a billion trees. Given its long history, the future of the nursery is of obvious interest to the local community, to farmers, tree planters and land owners across southern Ontario.

Minister, would you please indicate the purpose of the review and the process by which the St Williams Tree Nursery will be reviewed?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister without Portfolio [Privatization]): We certainly understand the history of the St Williams Tree Nursery. Indeed, it was one of the three tree nurseries we announced we would want to consider whether there are ways in which the private sector could help us operate those nurseries more effectively and more efficiently on behalf of Ontarians, whether those Ontarians be in the Norfolk area or whether they be in other parts of this province.

We elected to introduce the tree nurseries, St Williams being one of them, to the process, the first part of the process being a very careful review of the options and

alternatives that we have available to us to introduce private sector processes to make these operations more efficient.

In fact, the St Williams Tree Nursery is about to undergo that first part of the process where consultants will be hired to provide us with that assistance. Of course, we intend to defer making any decisions on the St Williams Tree Nursery, as with any other candidates, until we have completed that assessment of the options and understand what those options are.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister, for your response and the opportunity for local people to have their say. Our local community has been holding discussions over the past year and I have had the privilege of meeting with many people in my riding about the nursery. In fact, our Minister of Natural Resources met with several key stakeholders recently during a visit to Simcoe and was able to personally visit the nursery.

The minister's announcement of the privatization framework outlined various components of the privatization process. One of these is public consultation. Given the public interest related to the St Williams nursery, I wonder if the minister could provide some detail on how my constituents may further make their views known regarding this particular nursery.

Hon Mr Sampson: Indeed, we believe it's important for us in assessing the options to hear the views and opinions of a number of Ontarians who would be affected by a privatization initiative. In fact the CEO of the privatization secretariat and the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources will be hosting a public meeting in St Williams to discuss how those options could help that particular nursery get more involved with the private sector to deliver that particular nursery product on a more efficient and more effective basis.

We believe public input is indeed a crucial part of the process. That's why we have dialled it into our framework as we have. I would like to encourage the honourable member and his constituents and other Ontarians to participate in that process, to help us make the right decisions for Ontarians.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is directed to the minister responsible for the promotion of Ontario tourism. In my hand here I have a poster which is produced by your ministry and it promotes what they call 49 of the biggest, tallest, longest, most exciting things that together make us unique. It's got Ontario, Canada, and our symbol on the poster.

Minister, when I looked at the poster, I looked at number 18. It was the Lake of the Woods Regatta in Kenora. I looked at 26, Old Fort William in Thunder Bay, and 33, Casa Loma here in Toronto. But when I got to number 8, I was a little bit perplexed. It was the Museum of Civilization, located as number 8.

Can the minister tell me where this museum is located please?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): In response to the

question, we're very proud of what we are putting out in the ministry regarding tourism.

Mr Miclash: Answer the question.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I am very happy to say that next week in Ontario we are going to be making an announcement about Tourism Awareness Week, which starts next Monday and will run for a complete week.

I think it's important that we make people aware, just as we have in that publication, that there are so many good things about Ontario tourism. But the main thing is, we want people in Ontario to partake of this initiative next week, so we are very encouraged that that brochure has been received by that member — and read, I might say. It makes us feel better about that. We're very encouraged about Tourism Awareness Week.

Mr Miclash: Minister, I must tell you that the museum is located in the province of Quebec, in Hull, and promoted here: "Ontario, Yours to Discover." I went through the brochure a little bit further and I found a 1-800 number. I thought I'd phone up that 1-800 number and ask them a little bit about resorts in northwestern Ontario. I asked them about five or six resorts. They did not know where one of those resorts was located, yet they could tell me that the museum was located in Hull, Quebec. When I went on to ask the operator why he would not know about our resorts in northwestern Ontario, he advised me that they hadn't paid their \$200 or \$250 to be registered.

I want to know, has the museum paid its \$200 or \$250 to be registered on that hotline, and will you commit to this House today to let every tourist operator know how they can become part of your 1-800-ONTARIO number, not just those promotions in Hull, Quebec, but every single one here in Ontario?

Hon Mr Saunderson: As the member is probably aware, we decided that the best way to make information available to people who wish to avail themselves of tourism facilities in Ontario, such as resorts or other facilities, was to have the private sector participate. Accordingly, Bell Canada has taken on that responsibility and looks after that 1-800 line now instead of the government doing it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order, order, order, order. That was five orders. We've got 30 seconds left. Let's allow the minister to finish. Minister.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Thank you very much, because this is important information. Not like the previous two governments, we are now allowing the private sector to be very much a part of this government. Therefore the private sector is now looking after tourist information and tourist reservation information, and I think that's a very good step. It is saving approximately \$10 million over the next three years. They don't understand that over there. But as long as a tourist destination or a facility wishes to be —

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Miclash: Look at that, Minister. "Ontario, Yours to Discover." Have you seen it yet? It is called "Ontario, Yours to Discover": Hull, Quebec.

The Speaker: Member for Kenora, thank you.

PETITIONS

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas prior to the Mike Harris government's introduction of the Ontario drug benefit plan on June 15, 1996" —

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Take your seat just for a moment. Could I have order, please. Would the members come to order. If you're leaving to have conversations, please do so. Order, please. Member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I'll try again.

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram through legislation more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people to elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with the sentiments of this petition.

1510

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Karen Rabideau, who is the worker co-chair of the health and safety committee of Local 93B of the Glass Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers in Wallaceburg. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government has begun a process to open the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario; and

"Whereas this act is the single most important piece of legislation for working people since it is designed to protect our lives, safety and health while at work and allow us to return home to our families in the same condition in which we left; and

"Whereas the government has made it clear that they intend to water down the act and weaken the rights of workers under the law, including the right to know, the right to participate and especially the right to refuse unsafe work; and

"Whereas this government has already watered down proper training of certified committee members;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act or erode the rights of workers any further and ensure strict enforcement of the legislation."

I add my name to theirs.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario concerning drinking and driving.

"Whereas drinking and driving is the largest criminal cause of death and injury in Canada;

"Whereas every 45 minutes in Ontario a driver is involved in an alcohol-related crash;

"Whereas most alcohol-related accidents are caused by repeat offenders;

"Whereas lengthy licence suspensions for impaired driving have been shown to greatly reduce repeat offences;

"Whereas the victims of impaired drivers often pay with their lives while only 22% of convicted impaired drivers go to jail and even then for an average of 21 days;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the provincial government to pass legislation that will strengthen measures against impaired drivers in Ontario."

I support this petition and have therefore signed it.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to

North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions forwarded to me by Buzz Hargrove, president of the Canadian Auto Workers. These are petitions signed by members of the Canadian Auto Workers from London, Cambridge, Hamilton, Toronto and Mississauga.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper, a Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injury and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

VIDEO LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I have a petition here professing:

"Our world belongs to God, and believing that governments are called to secure justice for all with prejudice towards none and with compassion for the weak and powerless, and believing that VLTs are highly addictive, their wide and easy accessibility encourages broad participation, VLTs are user-friendly, and since computers appeal to the young, it stands to reason that VLTs will sucker-punch especially upcoming generations. VLTs feed the hunger of quick-fix solutions to complex problems. Acting like financial vacuum cleaners, VLTs indiscriminately suck up disposable earnings of those who cannot afford to play the casinos. VLTs do not lead to honest work.

We, the undersigned, urge you to oppose and resist the spread of gambling into the area of Huron."

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): "Whereas Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, is a threat to our education system;

"Whereas the Education Improvement Commission has far-reaching and unprecedented powers;

"Whereas outsourcing of non-instructional jobs such as school and administrative secretaries, custodians, library technicians and educational assistants will result in chaos and poor service and limited savings, if any;

"We, the residents of Ontario, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 104, to limit the powers of the Education Improvement Commission and to guarantee successor rights for non-instructional jobs."

I have affixed my signature in full support of the sentiments.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by the United Food and Commercial Workers and signed by a couple of hundred of their members from across Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To save workers' compensation.

"To Premier Harris and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational diseases; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT, including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeal structure with worker representation, access to the office of the worker adviser, and that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I add my name to theirs in support.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I keep getting petitions about our current child care crisis in Ontario. This petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important, fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are working single parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the

Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities, urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province, and restore funding to their previous levels."

I've affixed my signature to this document.

1520

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by members of the United Steelworkers of America, CUPE and OPSEU. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers have provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre and clinics have made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre and that professional and technical expertise and advice continue to be provided through the occupational health clinics for Ontario workers."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues, I add my name to these petitioners'.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition against fingerprinting, the plan of Mike Harris. It reads:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, has proposed the fingerprinting of all Ontario citizens; and

"Whereas fingerprinting Ontarians was never promised in the Common Sense Revolution, or in his election campaign; and

"Whereas universal fingerprinting of Ontario citizens is a direct violation of basic civil rights and fundamental rights of privacy; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is intervening and intruding into all aspects of daily life, from megacities, user fees, rent controls, and market value taxes, which he never promised in the election campaign;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to oppose Mike Harris's plan to finger-

print Ontario citizens, and to respect their privacy and to stop creating a mega-government that does not respect the basic freedom and individuality of the citizens of Ontario."

I've affixed my signature and my fingerprint to this petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by the Ontario Federation of Labour in the name of Gord Wilson, the president of the federation. The petition reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Progressive Conservative government of Ontario is proposing to amend the Workers' Compensation Act; and

"Whereas the proposed amendments include cutting maximum benefits from 90% to 85% of net average earnings; and

"Whereas the government is further proposing to outlaw workers' compensation benefits for chronic stress; and

"Whereas the direct payment by employers to employees for the first four to six weeks of disability essentially amounts to privatizing a huge portion of WCB, giving employers total control and benefiting private insurance companies; and

"Whereas the Occupational Disease Panel will be folded back into the WCB, therefore compromising their ability to do credible independent work on establishing the cause of occupational diseases; and

"Whereas employer assessments under the government's proposal will be cut by 5%, adding billions of dollars to the board's unfunded liability;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to hold full provincial public hearings on any proposed amendments to workers' compensation legislation to provide all the people of Ontario the opportunity for full disclosure of all proposed amendments and the ability and forum to ensure that all the facts and potential impacts are heard and addressed."

The few measly days they've offered don't meet this demand. I add my name to theirs.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bills, as amended:

Bill Pr74, An Act respecting 4588 Bathurst

Bill Pr75, An Act respecting 750 Spadina Avenue Association.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPREHENSIVE ROAD SAFETY ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR UN ENSEMBLE COMPLET DE MESURES VISANT LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mr Palladini moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to promote road safety by increasing periods of suspension for Criminal Code convictions, impounding vehicles of suspended drivers, requiring treatment for impaired drivers, raising fines for driving while suspended, impounding critically defective commercial vehicles, creating an absolute liability offence for wheel separations, raising fines for passing stopped school buses, streamlining accident reporting requirements and amending other road safety programs / Projet de loi 138, Loi visant à favoriser la sécurité routière en augmentant les périodes de suspension pour les déclarations de culpabilité découlant du Code criminel, en mettant en fourrière les véhicules de conducteurs faisant l'objet d'une suspension, en exigeant le traitement des conducteurs en état d'ébriété, en augmentant les amendes pour conduite pendant que son permis est suspendu, en mettant en fourrière les véhicules utilitaires comportant des défauts critiques, en créant une infraction entraînant la responsabilité absolue en cas de détachement des roues, en augmentant les amendes pour dépassement d'un autobus scolaire arrêté, en simplifiant les exigences relatives à la déclaration des accidents et en modifiant d'autres programmes de sécurité routière.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I certainly would like to thank both opposition parties for their support on this bill. I would, however, like to clarify something the leader of the third party said so that at least he'll understand where this government is coming from. I said we would consider implementing 72 of the recommendations of Target '97. Some of the items the leader of the third party addressed are being further reviewed before any more consideration would be given to implement. I just wanted to get that clarified.

OPPOSITION DAY

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): This is an opposition motion, and it reads:

Whereas the events at Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995, resulting in the death of Dudley George, remain the subject of widespread concern in Ontario; and

Whereas the role of police, government officials and others in these events has never been fully explained; and

Whereas various court proceedings have raised further concerns while leaving many important questions unanswered;

Be it therefore resolved that this House believes an independent inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act into the events at Ipperwash, including all government discussions and decisions leading up to those events, will be

essential for bringing out the full truth surrounding this tragic confrontation.

This is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Mr Hampton has moved opposition day number 6.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I'm going to be asking to share the time with the member for Algoma, the member for London Centre and the member for Welland-Thorold.

The Acting Speaker: Leader of the third party, under the standing order for opposition days you can use the time — it's divided equally — any way you wish.

1530

Mr Hampton: I just wanted to make the table officers aware of that.

We bring this motion to the House not with any sense of antagonism. Frankly, we bring this motion to the House in a tone of sadness. We bring this motion to the House because anyone who objectively looks at the circumstances surrounding the Ipperwash situation in September 1995 and anyone who looks at all the questions that have not been answered could not be happy with what is happening, could not be satisfied with what is happening. Anyone who looks at this situation through eyes of objectivity, we believe, would conclude that there must be a public inquiry to find out why Dudley George was killed, why an individual life was lost.

We want to raise today some of the questions that remain unanswered. Some of the questions are very basic questions, and it would appear, I think, to any objective observer that these questions must be answered. If the justice system in this province is to enjoy respect and if the justice system in this province is to act fairly, these questions must be answered.

One of the first questions that must be asked is simply this: How did things at Ipperwash Park escalate to the point where the OPP riot squad and the OPP tactical weapons squad were brought to the park and were put in a state of readiness such that they went into the park and as a result Dudley George died? What were the decisions that led to that kind of escalation?

As part of the background for this, I think people need to realize that the occupiers of the park numbered only some 40 individuals. They were not an organized group. They were not the organized expression of a chief and a band council. They were not the organized expression of someone with legal authority. This was a group of individuals who were protesting what they perceived to be a long-standing wrong. It has been found as a judicial fact that they were not armed. How is it that in this context — these are only 40 individuals; they are not armed; they do not represent some official body; they are individuals — the government could escalate the situation so rapidly and so fiercely that the OPP riot squad and tactical weapons squad are called in and sent into the park? What sort of discussions, what sort of perceptions, would result in that kind of undue escalation of this situation ending in the death of Dudley George?

Another question that needs to be answered — we have an incredibly strange situation here. A government backbencher, the member for Lambton, was in the OPP's command post. Not only was he in the OPP's command post, which I regard as highly irregular to begin with, but

we know he was exchanging faxes and phone calls with the Premier's office and the Solicitor General's office back and forth. Not only that, but he is specifically referred to in the police logs and the Solicitor General is specifically referred to in the police logs and the Premier is specifically referred to in the police logs, the OPP logs. Anyone who has had anything to do with police officers knows that when police are dealing with a situation, they do not put extraneous information in their police logs. They only include relevant information, information that is relevant to the chain of events.

What was the government member, the Conservative member for Lambton, doing in that police command post? What was he doing sending faxes to the Premier, receiving faxes from the Premier's office, sending faxes to the Solicitor General's office, getting faxes back from the Solicitor General's office, making phone calls back and forth and then relating these to the police? Who was giving the police direction here? Was a political person giving the police direction? Were the OPP in effect subject to two chains of direction?

Were they subject to a chain of direction from the OPP commissioner, but was there also political direction?

This kind of question has to be asked and inquired into. This is highly irregular. It is highly irregular to find a government MPP in the OPP's command post.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Any MPP.

Mr Hampton: Any MPP. At first blush it smacks right away of political involvement in what is essentially a policing matter, and it is elementary to democracy that there ought not to be any political interference, any political involvement with decisions made by the police or actions taken by the police. In a democratic state those two are to be completely separate. There should never be any political supervision of the police or political direction of the police.

This smacks at first blush of, this points to, that kind of involvement, that kind of interference. There needs to be an inquiry to get at these very serious facts and these very serious appearances which frankly go to the heart of how a democracy functions and the separation between the political state and policing.

We need to ask, what was the role of MPP Beaubien from Lambton in communicating information between the Premier's office and the OPP, or vice versa? A very important question. What did Mr Beaubien mean when he said in one fax that he would refuse to be the fall guy for Ipperwash? What does that mean, that he would refuse to be the fall guy? The language suggests that something wrong is happening and that he is not going to be the person held responsible for that which is out of place or that which is improper. He is not going to take the blame; he is not going to take the fall; he is not going to be the person held culpable. What does that comment mean in one of his faxes? This needs to be inquired into.

Who in the Premier's office gave the instruction to "[G]et the" — expletive — "Indians out of the park"? We know that comment is widely reported within the civil service as having been made by someone closely connected with the Premier's office. That needs to be inquired into.

Why did the OPP ignore warnings from Assembly of First Nations Chief Ovide Mercredi about entering the park at night? As we understand it from testimony which was given, Ovide Mercredi called the OPP and said to them: "Do not go into the park and escalate a situation. There are ways to resolve this situation. Do not go into the park." Yet the OPP, receiving good advice from someone who should have the respect and should be acknowledged as someone who is a very responsible leader, ignored that advice. Why did they ignore that advice? What other advice did they get? What other direction did they get which led them to go into the park, when they received specific advice from such a responsible person that going into the park would be the wrong thing to do, that it would simply escalate the situation?

Then, even more difficult to understand, after ignoring this advice from Ovide Mercredi the day before the events happened which resulted in the death of Dudley George, the OPP in a dramatic change of direction then asked, on the following day, for Ovide Mercredi to intervene. The day before these tragic events happened, they appear to have no interest in his advice, no interest in what he had to offer, no interest in his information. The day after the tragic events which led to the death of Dudley George, they suddenly have great respect for Ovide Mercredi, in fact such great respect that they want him to intervene, that they want him to mediate. What a dramatic shift. What a night-and-day shift in position. How could this happen? This too needs to be answered.

What also needs to be answered is this: At what point and by what means did the Ontario Provincial Police change its long-standing practice of negotiating these kinds of situations, of negotiating them down, of talking? When did they change from that long-standing position into one where they escalate into confrontation?

1540

Members of the Liberal Party will know that when they were in government that was the position of the OPP, and I know that when I was Attorney General of the province that was the position of the OPP: Never escalate situations. Always find ways to negotiate them down. Always find common ground you can agree on, then move from that common ground to greater common ground and reach an agreement by means of discussion and negotiation. Never escalate situations into a realm where confrontation can occur, where violence may happen.

That was the long-standing position of the Ontario Provincial Police in this province when dealing with issues involving first nations, yet not two months after the Conservative government came to power that long-standing OPP practice is radically changed. It is radically changed such that, in an instance which I do not think could in any way call for confrontation and escalation, confrontation and escalation actually happen.

A very big question that needs to be asked and a very big question that needs to be answered: Who changed that policy? For what reason did they change that policy? When did they change that policy? The government has not answered that question. There needs to be an answer.

To whom within the Premier's Office did Deb Hutton report on her participation in meetings regarding events

at Ipperwash? We all in this Chamber know about Richard Nixon. Richard Nixon was famous as a President of the United States for saying, "I see nothing, I know nothing." Whenever something wrong happened in his administration, his response: "I didn't know about it. My officials didn't tell me. The people who work for me kept me uninformed."

We know that Deb Hutton attended the interministerial meetings dealing with the Ipperwash situation. Deb Hutton is an official in the Premier's Office. Either Deb Hutton did not tell the Premier, in which case there is a huge problem in the chief government office of this land, or we're being kept uninformed as to who exactly she did inform and what directions she was given.

This needs to be answered. Someone died here. Someone died unnecessarily. Someone died in circumstances which call all of this into question. These are questions which in a just society need to be asked, and especially in a just society they need to be answered. Why were OPP officers permitted to manufacture souvenir mugs after the shooting at Ipperwash as if to celebrate the death of Dudley George? Who is in charge here? Who is responsible for this? The government refuses to ask the question and the government refuses to get answers.

Someone died here, and yet within the OPP, following the events, officers were circulating mugs celebrating the event, and the government refuses to answer and refuses to call an inquiry to get to the question. How is it possible that armed Ontario Provincial Police officers would believe it was reasonable to beat a native protestor to the point of inflicting more than 25 blunt-trauma wounds and expect they would be able to get away with it? That is another sad event that took place here: 25 blunt-trauma wounds as established by medical evidence.

How could this happen? The question needs to be asked. How did it happen? Who gave the direction? Who allowed this to happen? Who is responsible over there? The government refuses to ask the questions. The government refuses to hold an inquiry. The government refuses to get the answers.

Exactly what is the policy of this government concerning its relations with first nations in Ontario? If we believe the remarks that were made by this government and are associated with this government, the government said, "Get the Indians out of the park." In fact, we are told by people in the civil service that the statement was: "Get the" expletive "Indians out of the park. We don't care how you do it. Get them out."

Is that this government's approach? Is that this government's policy? We don't know because the government refuses to call the inquiry that will get to the bottom of this. The government refuses to call the inquiry that will start asking these questions.

Some other questions: In dealing with this situation, one would think the rational approach would be that where you believe you have a disagreement with 40 individuals, where those 40 individuals — and this did not come out of the blue, this did not happen overnight. There's a long-standing issue here. I know it. I knew it when I was in government. I attended in that part of the province to try to lower the temperature. My colleague

from Algoma, as the former Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for native affairs, knows about the long-standing history.

Given that there was a historical grievance, why would the government not attempt to sit down and talk with the occupiers? Why no attempt at discussion? Not only that, but instead of attempting to discuss the government marched off to court. The government tried to escalate things right away into the hard fist of an injunction. Not only was it an injunction process, the government had two choices as to an injunctive process. They could have proceeded by way of notice. They could have given the occupiers or representatives of the occupiers notice that they were going to apply for an injunction. That would have given the occupiers an opportunity to attend at that court proceeding and to make their case. There would have been an opportunity for discussion there.

Who knows what could have come out of the discussion at that kind of injunction process, an injunction application with notice. There might have been a settlement. But no, the government didn't even choose to do that. They proceeded without notice. They proceeded as if to avoid any discussion. They proceeded as if to avoid any chance of settlement, any chance of discussion and coming together of the minds. They proceeded on a without notice basis, the hardest, the nastiest way of bringing the law into a dispute.

Finally, we believe they directed the police to move into the park.

But the government refuses to call an inquiry so that all of these questions can be asked and all of these questions can be answered.

In our view, if you look at the totality of unanswered questions, if you look at the totality of contradictions, if you look at the totality of what happened here, this cries out for a public inquiry to get to the bottom of this situation. Justice cries out for an inquiry to answer the question: Why did this unarmed person die?

The government refuses to call that inquiry. The government refuses to ask these questions. The government refuses to allow a process that will have these questions answered. Why? What is the government afraid of?

1550

From time to time in this House we've heard the government say, "There's a criminal process happening." We know from other inquiries — for example, in the Westray mine inquiry in Nova Scotia, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that it is possible to hold a public inquiry around some of these issues as long as that public inquiry does not go to the root of who is criminally responsible. It is possible to do that. The government refuses to do it. The government continues to say, "There is a criminal trial proceeding, and as long as that criminal trial is proceeding, none of these questions can be answered."

In my view, the Westray mine inquiry stands for the proposition that such a public inquiry can be structured and can be held such that these questions will be answered without necessarily pointing the finger of criminal culpability, criminal liability, at anyone. But the government refuses to put in place that kind of procedure. The government refuses to have these questions asked.

The government refuses to let these questions be answered.

This is not going to go away. Part of what we want to do here today is to raise over and over again the very serious questions that must be answered. In any semblance of a society that is democratic and believes in the rule of law, these questions must be answered. We're going to continue to ask the questions. We're going to continue to raise the issues until this government does the right thing and calls for a public inquiry.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I rise on behalf of the government to address the motion before us. Let me begin by saying that the death that occurred at Ipperwash Provincial Park was a tragedy that has impacted on many lives. But as a result of this occurrence and others, criminal charges were laid. As members of the House know, some of these criminal charges are still before the courts. Because charges are before the courts, extreme care must be taken in making any comment that might prejudice the trials that are ongoing and/or the rights of the accused involved in these trials.

It is important for members to realize that statements within the Legislature are public statements. These statements, when referring to matters that are before the courts, could impact on any one of these court cases. It is for this reason that caution must be used in these matters.

It is the best policy for any government or any member of the Legislature to refrain from commenting on these matters until the court process has been completed. I refer members to section 23(g)(i) of the standing orders:

"In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he...refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding...that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination."

Our position on this matter has been clear and consistent. It is based on respect for due process under the law. It is for this reason that the government has kept its remarks on this issue brief in question period, and it is for this reason that the government will continue to refrain from being drawn into an improper debate. It is because these matters are before the courts that we have repeatedly stated that other options will not be considered until all these court proceedings are completed. It would be premature to make a decision or to comment further while these matters remain before the courts.

In proceeding in this manner, the government is following the proper, traditional and appropriate steps in dealing with this situation. In doing so, we are acting within the boundaries of the law. To ensure that all individuals receive the justice they deserve, I caution members to respect the law and tradition of this House in demonstrating similar caution in matters that are currently before the courts.

As I said previously, what happened at Ipperwash Park was a tragedy. I know that given other circumstances, the member for Lambton would comment directly on the impact this has had on his community, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike. I'm sure everyone is aware of the impact of these events on the community. The delay

by the federal government in settling the future of the Camp Ipperwash lands has led to frustration and concern within the community. Continued efforts on resolving this issue would be a positive step for everyone involved. Given the legal parameters I have set out, the government will not comment further in this debate.

I do want to reiterate one final comment: At no time did the government direct the OPP. The government sought a civil injunction as a means to end the occupation. As government counsel said when they sought the injunction, this is a nation of laws and there are proper ways to deal with these situations. Relying on the courts and the due process of law was the direction given by the government.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent between all parties that the remaining time will be split equally between the opposition parties.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed, that the remaining time will be split equally?

Mr Wildman: It is agreed, but on a point of order, I would just point out that we would prefer the government to participate in the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed that the time will be split between the two opposition caucuses? Agreed.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I assume that since there are 44 minutes left of the government's time, that would be added to whatever time exists at this point for each caucus.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, that's correct: 22 and 22. Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: It's with some interest that I join this debate. Mr Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who has been very persistent on this subject for the last two years, will have much more to say later on in the debate, as will our critic for the Attorney General's department and the Solicitor General's department, the member for Timiskaming.

Let me first say that I find it very strange that the government has taken the position that it does not want to have any further debate at all on this motion. I'm saying that because I think the motion itself is very non-confrontational. I know that in this House we are quite often subject to motions put forward either by the opposition or by government that are confrontational in nature, and I suppose if one wanted to find a reason for not supporting a particular course of action, one could always find that in most motions presented here. This motion is not that way at all.

This motion is simply saying there are an awful lot of unanswered questions about this particular matter that ought to be dealt with. It has been almost two years since the occurrence happened back in September 1995, and why not set up an independent inquiry to deal with the many unanswered questions people have? Right now, there's an awful lot of speculation going on about what really happened there — I suppose our particular version of events is just as valid as somebody else's version of the events that occurred — and one way to deal with that is to have an inquiry.

As to the government's persistence in not wanting to have an inquiry set up, we realize full well that evidence

cannot be taken until all the matters before the courts are totally dealt with, but surely the government can agree at this time to have such an inquiry take place. That will at least show good faith to all the various parties that were involved, be they police, be they native individuals or bands, or be they other citizens in Ontario. The government's reluctance to do that I think leads the general public, who have very little knowledge of this matter other than what they've read in the newspapers and seen on television and heard on radio etc to the supposition, "What does the government have to hide in this matter?" I suppose that's the underlying aspect of this whole situation that people find extremely troubling.

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When you look at what happened with the Westray inquiry in Nova Scotia, it is quite clear that in that particular case the terms of reference of an inquiry were, in effect, put together, assembled and written before any evidence was called, while the criminal matters that resulted from the Westray incident were still before the courts. Both processes can go on simultaneously.

For the government to take the position that it doesn't want to have anything to say about this matter at all until all the matters that are presently before the courts are dealt with, you could be looking at a vast amount of time. There's the criminal aspect. We know that all the criminal trials have now been dealt with and that sentencing will take place in two or three months. But there's also the civil case. Is the government saying as well that until the civil case has actually been determined, which may take one, two, three, four or five years — some of these cases do take an extensively long period of time — no inquiry will take place until the last possible civil trial in this particular matter has been dealt with? In that case, we may be looking at a four-, five- or six-year delay.

Obviously time in this kind of matter is extremely important. The longer we're away from the actual incident, the more likely people's minds are to be clouded over what actually happened on that weekend. It's from that aspect alone that many people can very easily draw the conclusion about who's got what to hide in this case. What does the government have to hide in this case?

I share many of the same concerns that have already been expressed by the leader of the third party about what the government backbencher was doing on this site. Why did he say he was in constant contact with the Premier's office, by faxes, by telephone etc? These are highly unusual situations.

When you look at the one document, for example, which is the memorandum that was put out by the assistant crown attorney — it doesn't have a date but it's from the Ministry of the Attorney General — he talks about why certain charges were withdrawn and why other charges weren't proceeded with. But it's not actually that document that I want to refer to; it's the notes of the meeting that took place on September 5, 1995. That was the meeting that took place here at Queen's Park.

I find it very interesting that on the one hand the option that was approved by the people who were at the meeting — they were all government employees and OPP employees — stated that a civil injunction proceeding on

an ex parte basis would be proceeded with, yet on the very next page of exactly the same memo it states that the OPP will have the discretion as to how to proceed with removing the Stony Pointers from the park.

It seems to me rather inconsistent that in the same memo there's a discussion about what took place at this meeting, whereby the OPP are basically told how to proceed, how to deal with these people who are occupying the park, and yet at the same time the matter is before the courts as well by way of an interim injunction application. It seems to me that you get the injunction first and then you determine how best to execute that injunction as far as the people in the park are concerned and how they are going to be dealt with.

In other words, by the government not agreeing to have an inquiry take place at this time, I think what has really been added to the whole situation is that this has just given people who are watching out there and people who have been following this over the last two years more and more ammunition, as it were, to think that maybe there was undue government interference.

What does the government have to hide in this matter? Why doesn't it just come clean on the whole issue, agree to an inquiry and at the appropriate time, once the court matters have been dealt with, allow the evidence to be taken? There's an awful lot of preliminary work that could already take place. The longer you wait in these matters, the more clouded people's recollections are going to be as to what actually happened on that particular weekend.

So I say to the government that it's a very ill-advised course of action that they're taking. We know that nowadays the more you try to stonewall a situation, the more the demand is going to be to actually have an inquiry done in a case like this, and sooner or later the truth will come out. I think it would be to the best of all parties concerned, whether they're native, whether they're police, whether they're the political element, whether they're other government agencies and workers, that this matter be resolved as quickly as possible.

It has already been indicated by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt on a number of different occasions that this was the only time, I believe, in the last 100 years that somebody in the native community has actually lost their life as a result of an incident like this. This is an extremely serious matter.

We are all always concerned about the powers of police and the powers of the citizens and the powers of the people who are involved in these kinds of actions in our society. I think the earlier we deal with this matter, the better the recollections of all the various parties to the events that took place are going to be and the better the final outcome of the inquiry will be.

The longer we wait, the more it's going to reflect ill on the government and the more it's going to cause more and more questions to arise in people's minds. So I say to the government, agree to an inquiry at this point in time and allow a free vote on this issue.

I found it very interesting in the debate that took place earlier today during question period that the Attorney General simply did not answer the question that was put by the member for Algoma: "Are you going to allow a

free vote on this matter today?" Although there were all sorts of beautiful statements given by him at that point in time as to what was going to happen, he did not answer the single central question. He didn't say, "Yes, I am going to allow a free vote," and undoubtedly there won't be a free vote on this matter.

But I would urge the Attorney General between now and 6 o'clock, between now and the time the vote actually gets called, to have a change of mind, to speak with his other cabinet colleagues, to get instructions, if need be, from the Premier to allow a free vote to take place on this particular motion. I think the people of Ontario demand it and I think this situation, this very tragic situation, demands it. Let's agree to an inquiry at this point in time and let's have a free vote on this particular issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you ascertain whether or not there is a quorum present?

The Acting Speaker: Could you see if there is a quorum.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: Thank you, Speaker. The reason I asked you to check to ensure that there was a quorum present was because we are particularly disappointed in the government's response to this opposition motion put forward by my leader today.

I listened carefully to the comments of the Attorney General, the minister responsible for native affairs in this province, in which he tried to justify the government's lack of response to this very seriously considered motion we have put before the House today. He argued that it was inappropriate for members of the government to comment on situations that might be before the courts. He argued that as a justification for the fact that he himself was only going to give a token intervention in the debate and that no other members of the governing party were going to participate in the debate, to the point where the government whip then had to ask for unanimous consent that the time be divided among the opposition members so we could indeed have a debate.

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The government is taking the position in response to this motion of not wanting to hear, not wanting to participate in any matter that deals with this issue that led to the confrontation in the dark at Ipperwash park and the death of Dudley George. Let's be frank.

Mr Frank Klees (York-Mackenzie): No, I'm Frank.

Mr Wildman: This is not a facetious matter. A man died here. If this government really wanted the truth to come out, it could. If the government were really interested in having all the facts become public, they would. If the government really wanted the public to know who made the decisions, what decisions were made, why they were made and what happened that led to the confrontation and to the death of the first aboriginal person to die

in a land claims dispute, not just in Ontario but in Canada, that would become public.

The fact that we do not have all the facts, that we do not have a commitment to a public inquiry, simply indicates that the government does not want us to have the facts, does not want the public to know what happened, does not want to have a full, clear inquiry so we can ensure that we know why this happened, why it occurred and ensure that it never happens again in Ontario.

That raises all sorts of questions. Why does the government not want the information to be public? It isn't, as the Attorney General tried to argue, that it might in some way prejudice a court proceeding, because as my leader pointed out quite clearly, the Supreme Court of Canada had ruled that we could have an inquiry into the Westray mine disaster as long as the inquiry was not mandated to point fingers of criminal liability. We could do that here if the government wanted the information to become public, if the government wanted all the facts to be known.

It has also been argued by the Premier on occasion that yes, there might be a public inquiry into the events at Ipperwash once all the court proceedings are completed — there might be. But even if you take that view, there is absolutely nothing to prohibit the government now, today, or before now, stating clearly that there will be a public inquiry. They may maintain their position that it can't take place now, but they don't have to put a time frame on it. They can say clearly that there will be a public inquiry. Can't the government do that much? Instead, the Attorney General gets up in his place today and says they will not participate in this debate.

They won't put the facts on the table. They won't explain what happened. They won't explain the reasoning they used that led to the decisions that were made. They don't want us to know. They don't want the George family to know. They don't want the aboriginal community to know. They don't want anybody to know what happened and what led to the death of Dudley George on that night in September.

I'm going to try to put on the record what I have been able to glean about the events that occurred. As my leader said, they raise all sorts of questions, and that's why we believe a public inquiry needs to be held.

As my leader pointed out, in the previous government I had the responsibility for native affairs in this province. During that time, particularly at the beginning of our mandate, not too long after the Oka incident in Quebec, there were a number of occupations and confrontations in this province, as there were across the country.

I was informed, when I became minister, that the previous, Liberal government had established an inter-ministerial committee which in slang was called the blockade committee. This committee had representatives of various ministries: the ministry responsible for native affairs, that is, the Native Affairs Secretariat; the Ministry of Natural Resources; the Solicitor General; the Attorney General; the OPP; and whatever other agencies might be involved in the dispute. The purpose of this group was to meet to consult with one another about something that might become a confrontational situation, to determine

how the situation could be dealt with and to ensure it was not escalated. That was the purpose of that committee. Of course, that committee met when we were in government because of some of the confrontations that took place in this province. The whole purpose of the committee, as I said, was to try and ensure that the situations were not escalated into violence and that there could be a peaceful resolution.

I want to make it clear the position taken by the Ontario Provincial Police was one with which I agreed and for which I had a tremendous amount of respect. The committee did not give political direction to the OPP. They heard reports from the OPP, they talked about how we as a government should respond to the situation as understood by everyone involved, including the OPP, but the OPP made the decisions on how to deal with the issue.

The general position of our government, and as I understand it of previous governments, was that we would not negotiate the substance of the issue with the occupiers or some people who had put up a blockade, but we would negotiate and the OPP would negotiate how to bring an end to the occupation or to the blockade. After that happened, then we would go into the substance of the issues and deal with them. That was the position described to me when I was minister and we continued that position. I want to say to you that in every case where there was a blockade or an occupation in the time we were in government, the OPP followed that approach. Essentially they would cordon off the area. They would keep people separated if there were two sides. They would not be immediately in front of the blockade; they would be at some distance. Frankly, as one OPP officer described it to his colleagues, the purpose was to wait the occupiers out, from their standpoint, to cool everything out, and then maybe we could have a reasonable discussion afterwards. That was their approach.

With regard to the Ipperwash situation, I knew when I came into government that there was a long-standing dispute about the national defence camp which is adjacent to the park. That camp, as members know now if they didn't know before, had been established after the land of the Stony Point people had been expropriated by the federal government under the War Measures Act during the Second World War. The federal government had said this land was needed for the war effort and it would be returned afterwards. It was never returned. It shouldn't have been expropriated in the first place, but it certainly should have been returned after the war and it never was. So they were made homeless. Their traditional lands were taken away from them unilaterally by the federal government.

I was also aware that there had been statements made that there was a burial ground in the park, and that when this park was established in the late 1930s by the provincial government, the then Department of Lands and Forests, there were arguments raised that this should not become provincial land because it was traditional land and there was indeed a burial ground.

I was also briefed on the fact that there was a dispute, that the provincial officials said, "No, there really wasn't a burial ground," and so on, and that there was a dispute

there. I had meetings, actually, with representatives of the Stony Pointers, and they were difficult meetings, I'll admit, because of the dispute.

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I also know that, because of the frustration and the time it was taking to get the federal government to commit to transfer the land back and to clean it up so that it could be of use to the Stony Point people, there was an occupation at the National Defence camp. Not long after the provincial election in 1995, in early September, on Labour Day as I understand it, some of the occupiers in the National Defence camp, at the end of the day, went into Ipperwash Provincial Park.

My understanding, and I may be incorrect on this but my understanding is that the officials of the Ministry of Natural Resources did not attempt to prevent them from going into the park. The park was closing down; it was at the end of the park season. The water system for the National Defence camp is operated out of the park. As I understand it, officials of the Ministry of Natural Resources in fact showed the people who went into the park how to ensure that the water system remained functional. This was not a confrontation. There may have been strong words used, but it was not a confrontation. That's on Labour Day. They're let into the park. They're actually given the keys by the Ministry of Natural Resources officials. The police are informed.

The next day the committee met here at Queen's Park. Again, as I understand it, the OPP indicated that they would follow the process they had followed before: try to cool things out, keep everybody calm. But that's when things apparently started to change. Something happened. Suddenly the OPP started to follow a diametrically different approach. The numbers of OPP personnel brought in — somewhere in the neighbourhood of 250 officers — a paramilitary operation. The Canadian military was informed. There was a liaison officer apparently involved, a lieutenant called in.

Anyone looking at this would have questions. Why on earth the change from Labour Day, when the Ministry of Natural Resources people show the occupiers how to operate the water system and give them the keys, to the next day when we have this enormous buildup of forces? What happened? Who said there should be a change? Who gave the direction? On what basis did they give that direction? What information did they have or not have?

We've asked a number of times in this House about these questions and we haven't received satisfactory responses. The Attorney General has repeatedly said that the government did not give direction to the OPP, but he's very selective in the way he says that. He says he did not give them strategic direction. In other words, he's saying the government did not tell the OPP how to end the occupation. But when the documents were provided, with large portions of the minutes of the meetings taken out, they made one thing clear. In the minutes of the meeting, there was a decision made that the Stony Point people would be removed from the park. There's nothing in the minutes that says how they will be removed from the park, so in that sense the Attorney General is correct, but he is not correct when he tries to give the impression that there was not direction to get the people out of the park. There indeed was; it's right in the minutes.

We have a situation where the police apparently have been directed to remove people from the park, and the inference is that they are under the impression at least that they should use whatever force necessary to achieve that. Why? This is a park that was closed for the season. It wasn't stopping anybody else from using the park. Why? That's what we have to know. We have to know why. Why did they have to be removed? What was so necessary that would entail this kind of buildup of forces, and who decided that? Who made the decision? Was it the Minister of Natural Resources? Was it the parliamentary assistant who was in the committee? Was it the representative of the Premier's office who was in the committee? Who, under whose direction, and on whose advice?

There were apparently all sorts of rumours that there were arms within the park. The buildup of the police has been justified on that basis, that the aboriginal people were armed. We now know from the court cases that have been referred to by the Attorney General that it is an established fact that there were not arms in the park, that the aboriginal people were not armed, as they said throughout the peace that they were not armed. The closest thing to a weapon, from the court cases, was a bus that a young man apparently used, as has been established in the court, to try and stop OPP officers from bludgeoning one of the other occupiers and that a judge has decided he was justified in using to try to prevent the beating from continuing.

The fact that the occupiers used a bus to break through a gate: Does that justify the kind of buildup that took place? I don't think so. It certainly doesn't seem that way to me. As my leader said, we have the information that the member for Lambton was at the police post. He's mentioned in the police logs. He's faxing and telephoning back to the Premier's office, to officials in the Premier's office, to the Solicitor General's office, and he's mentioned by the OPP in their logs.

In my experience throughout my career in this place, I have always understood that it is completely inappropriate on any matter that involves the police or the justice system for an MPP, government or opposition, to be involved. It's just not appropriate. That in itself deserves an inquiry. What was Mr Beaubien doing? Who gave him the permission to be there? Who suggested he should be there? Who told him he should be communicating with the cabinet and with the Premier about this situation? And what was his role vis-à-vis the police?

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I want to make clear that we are not asking for an inquiry into the fracas that took place for a few minutes in the dark at the entrance to Ipperwash park. That is being dealt with in the court cases. We are not suggesting that matter should be the central part of any inquiry. That is being dealt with in the courts. But the courts are not dealing with the central issue: Who gave the direction? Who made the decisions? Who decided that there had to be this kind of action by the OPP? That is not being dealt with in the courts. Why were these decisions made?

Frankly, I think it's completely inappropriate that one police officer should be left out to dry, hanging out to dry, because this government doesn't want the truth to

come out. The courts have dealt with that case. He has been convicted. He will be sentenced. But who made the decisions that led to the actions that led to his conviction? Who made the decisions that led to the actions that caused the death of Dudley George? Why were those decisions made?

This government, if it wants the truth to come out, can commit now to a public inquiry that will bring all the facts to the fore so that we will all know why this happened and we will be able to ensure it never happens again in Canada.

The government is being cowardly. The government does not want people to know. The government would rather sweep this under the rug. Well it won't be swept under the rug. This is a matter that must be inquired into. I call on all members, don't follow the lead of the Attorney General. Follow your own consciences. A man died. We've got to find out why to ensure it doesn't happen again. Vote for this motion.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak, on this opposition day, to the whole issue of what happened at Ipperwash two years ago now. It certainly saddens me to find out this afternoon that the government has decided it won't allow its members to speak on this issue. It is usually a tradition in this place that, as is our right, opposition days are brought forward by both of the opposition parties during a session of the Legislature, and that all parties participate as a matter of right and, I guess I would say, responsibility so that the public gets to hear and see the views of all sides of this House, of all three parties that are represented in this House. So it's somewhat disappointing that it would seem the Attorney General has made a decision to muzzle the back bench of the government.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): It's unparliamentary to impute that motive.

Mr Ramsay: It just seems somebody has given an order because usually the case is, as you know, Speaker, that we work in rotation. The Attorney General in his initial statement in this debate, being the second speaker up, basically made a very brief statement and then said he would be the last speaker representing the government this afternoon and it was agreed that the rest of the time be split between the opposition parties. So from that I understand that's the Attorney General's decision. Since then, I have not seen a government member stand in his or her place to speak on this very important issue.

What this resolution speaks to is the very importance of the people of Ontario having a public inquiry so that all of us can get to the bottom of what happened at Ipperwash.

In the history of the province we have, from time to time, confrontations between sectors of our population and the government represented by its police forces. These things happen. We have disputes. People have disputes with their government. We always pride ourselves in Ontario that we can deal with these incidents and these differences in a peaceable manner. We pride ourselves on that because we think it's very important in

a mature democracy such as Ontario's that we can deal in a mature, adult way with these issues.

Something went very wrong in this case, and this is why we in the opposition are very puzzled about this. It's really been the *modus operandi* of the OPP, as the previous speaker has said, to wait these situations out. The OPP is one of the best police forces in the world. They're highly trained, very well equipped and extremely well disciplined. This is not the first incident the OPP has had to deal with over the years. They have the experience and the tradition of dealing with these types of confrontations and disputes.

Something very different happened here, and that's why we in the opposition were alerted by what happened that night in September two years ago, when Dudley George was fatally shot at Ipperwash Provincial Park. It would seem the OPP acted in a way that was different from their history and their tradition of handling such disputes, especially disputes with aboriginal peoples in this province. Something very different happened. This made us wonder why the OPP had acted in a very different way than had been its tradition.

As we go through some of the documents — and I must say right now that in our party the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, Gerry Phillips, has done a tremendous job in pursuing this incident and the events behind it. That's why we're here today: to put some pressure on this government to have a public inquiry so that all of us can get to the very bottom of what happened here.

We know the government is structured in a way to deal with these incidents and occurrences. In fact, the previous government had set up a committee that would be on call at any time to handle such incidents. So when this incident happened under the new Harris government, this committee was reconstituted, it was recalled to handle the task at hand.

It's interesting to note when you look at the people involved in this committee that it would be, in a sense, the usual suspects; it would be representatives of the various ministries that would be pertinent to this particular incident, the people at the secretariat dealing with aboriginal issues, natural resources, northern development, Solicitor General and corrections, the police. These are the normal people.

We also see that in attendance at these meetings of the emergency planning for aboriginal issue committee were officials, one official in particular from Premier Harris's office, and, as I said before, representatives from all the other agencies involved. What we really want to know is what happened at those meetings. Were there direct orders given to the OPP on how to handle this situation? Again, I stress we're asking that in this case because it would appear that the OPP handled this situation in a very different manner than they had previously handled situations such as this.

It's interesting that the situation really developed to the extent it did when we have a copy of a letter here from the Ministry of the Attorney General's office that was sent out in regard to the Ipperwash prosecutions a year after the incident, whereby the Attorney General's office realized that probably it would not succeed in obtaining

a prosecution against the natives who had been charged after this incident because of a legal term called "colour of right."

"Colour of right" means that the people involved in this particular incident had the very best belief in their hearts and minds that there was a cemetery site in this park. Colour of right is recognized as a factor in law regardless of whether the particular belief is true or not in existence. If it is truly believed to be true, then there is this colour of right that this person has.

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It was sad that the Attorney General's office and this crisis committee didn't realize this in the beginning and started to argue that, "We don't think there is a burial ground in this area and, therefore, the aboriginals had no right being in this park." Why this sort of research hadn't gone on while this incident was taking place really puzzles me. I think that if it had gone on, then probably we could have prevented this tragedy, and that's sad for everybody involved, especially the George family.

What I think happened is that we had a very newly elected government with its first sort of test, and this is the problem. I think that the newly elected Harris government in the late summer and early fall of 1995 wanted somehow to flex its muscles against this particular intrusion upon, as they would see it, law and order in Ontario. That's what we have to get to the bottom of because there are many, many outstanding questions as to what happened, mysteries, if you will, that are to this day unresolved.

While the Attorney General speaks to the fact that there's still the potential for judicial appeals to come forward, that there are still some civil litigation cases that are to come before the courts, what we are asking for today and have been asking for for the last year at least in this Legislature is that the government make a commitment that either, like the Westray mine inquiry, we make an inquiry in parallel to these court proceedings whereby evidence would only first appear in these court proceedings before the inquiry, or at least make the commitment that, once all the legal proceedings were completed, this government was committed to a judicial inquiry so that we could have that inquiry that would unravel all these mysteries, that would open up some of the dark corners around this incident, so that all the people in Ontario would know what really happened in the late summer of 1995 and early fall when the incident occurred.

There are many, many reasons why we want to have this. In fairness to the George family and in fairness, quite frankly, to the officer who has been convicted of the shooting, I think it's important for everybody involved and the people of Ontario that we have this public inquiry.

There are more detailed mysteries that we would like to know, in particular why the local member, the member for Lambton, was so intrinsically involved not only in the day-to-day operation of what the OPP was doing at the park, but it seemed hour by hour and minute by minute as this incident passed through time. I would tell you that, as a member of this House for 12 years now, I would never get myself involved in any police matter that happened in my riding. I believe the political arm of

government should be separate from the enforcement arm of government. That's one of the tenets that this government and this democracy is based upon, that there is a separation between the political aspect of government and the judicial aspect and that independence has to be maintained so that not only is there a perception that justice is being done, but in the reality truly justice is being done.

There's a real problem here with again possibly a newly elected member who obviously had a very hot issue incident happen in his riding with, I suppose, disgruntled and angry constituents upset about lack of access to their cottages in this case, but why he got so closely involved, how he got involved and who he was in contact with during that involvement are questions that have yet to be answered, and I believe the people of Ontario deserve to have that answer.

We try, as I said, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and others in this House, to bring up every week questions on this issue, but we cannot get to the bottom of this issue through the normal channels of question period or even the discussion we're having today as an official opposition day brought forward by the third party. We still do not get to the bottom of this. That's why we in the Legislature, all the opposition parties, have been calling for an inquiry, because it is the only way this Legislature will ever get to the bottom of what happened at Ipperwash.

It really saddens me to learn that this government is not allowing its members to speak. I don't believe, in the history of this place, I can remember an opposition day when we didn't normally go in rotation between all parties. We all participated. It's a day, from rule changes of a few years ago — because the government runs the agenda in this place, as you know — that the opposition gets an opportunity to bring forward issues, policy, subject areas that we feel are important and deserve to have some airing. That's what an opposition day is about. Of course it's usually something that the government disagrees with and therefore the government usually stands up and makes its case so that the people, the public, understand why the government is or is not pursuing a certain action. That's the normal case and procedure around this place.

For some reason we have not seen that today. It is a very major concern for us that we're not getting government spokespeople reacting to this today. We basically just have the line from the Attorney General as to their case, that this is not the time for a provincial or judicial inquiry into this matter.

As has been pointed out in this House many times, as people would remember, when the Westray coal mine had its tragedy a few years back in Nova Scotia, the government, through a ruling from a challenge at the Supreme Court, was able to proceed with a provincial inquiry there in Nova Scotia simultaneously with civil and criminal court actions taking place. The agreement was made that all new evidence would be brought before the judicial system before it came to the provincial inquiry.

As I said, that's certainly one way to handle this. I think it would be the most expeditious way to handle this so that we don't have to wait until a possible potential

appeal in the criminal matter and also the resolution of the civil litigation against the Premier and ministers of this government are completed.

I think the people of Ontario want to know what is happening here. I think they want to know: Was there any direction given by this newly elected government back in 1995 to the OPP? Why did the OPP seem to act in a manner different from their traditions in history in dealing with aboriginal disputes in this province? We pride ourselves in Ontario as a mature democracy, having a highly trained and well-disciplined police force and being able to handle these sorts of matters in a very sensitive way. That's been our history. But something changed here, and that's really the outstanding question that remains.

When we look at the different committees that were struck by this government and the participants on these committees, we see that a highly placed official in the Premier's office was at these meetings, and we know there was communication between the Premier's office and the member for Lambton, who happened to be in the command centre at the park. Again, it really amazes me that a politician would want to get involved directly in a police matter like that. The question there is also, did he do that on his own volition or was he asked to be there as a spotter and a reporter for the government, and maybe in the end a messenger from the government to the police? That is a concern we have.

I'm glad we have this opportunity today to speak to this matter. It's very, very important, and I hope in the end the government will listen to the opposition, to our calls for an inquiry, so all of us in this place and all the people in the province can get to the bottom of this matter.

1650

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate as well and to say how important I believe the issue is. It is a symbol of how the Ontario government deals with its first nations, and its implications are extremely broad and extremely important.

Just to refresh our memory and the public's memory, the Harris government was elected on June 8, 1995. Essentially, two months later this incident occurred. The government was aware of the possibility of it. As a matter of fact, the government had undercover police camping in Ipperwash Provincial Park prior to the incident. Then on Labour Day, September 4, the first nations, after the park had closed for the day so they wouldn't be overly disruptive, moved into the park and the park manager actually turned the keys over to them. That was on September 4. Two days later, on September 6, a first nations person was killed, the first incident in well over 100 years where in a land claim dispute a first nations person died as a result of that confrontation.

Here's the issue, the fundamental issue here, and this is why we are supporting the call for a full public judicial inquiry: The Premier has said it was the Ontario Provincial Police that handled this issue all on their own; the government merely was kept informed, but it was the OPP that handled this. The OPP are in our opinion being hung out to dry on this issue. In our opinion, it was the

government that played the key role in this most unfortunate incident.

That isn't just an accusation, and what I want to do over the next few minutes is to lay before the public the evidence of that. We wish we could lay that evidence before an inquiry, and we are prepared to do that at any time, under any conditions the Premier sets. We believe there is clear, unequivocal evidence that it was Premier Harris and the cabinet who made the key decisions at Ipperwash that resulted in that tragic situation.

I will begin to lay the evidence as we see it. First, who made the major decisions? The public should be aware that on a daily basis, starting on September 5, there was a meeting of senior people here at Queen's Park, including the Premier's personal executive assistant. That group, as I say, was meeting on a daily basis, with the Premier's executive assistant and, I might add, an elected member of the Legislature sitting at that meeting, one of the MPPs, a parliamentary assistant. They made, I believe under the direction of their ministers, the key decisions.

The key decisions were these: They decided to not treat it as a native affairs issue. They decided to treat it as what they called an MNR issue, a Ministry of Natural Resources issue. In my opinion it was clearly a first nations issue, but they decided to treat it as an MNR issue and they made this key decision: "The province will take steps to remove the occupiers ASAP. The OPP will have the discretion as to how to proceed with removing the Stony Pointers from the park." That's extremely important because it took away from the OPP the option of negotiations.

In my opinion, and we'll table later on, the OPP had a plan, Project Maple they called it, where they were going to have negotiators. They had lined up a series of negotiators; they had discussed how the negotiators were going to handle this. But the government decided, "No, we are going to remove them ASAP, as soon as possible." I think it was a huge mistake. I can perhaps understand how it happened. This was the first incident between the new Harris government and the first nations. Clearly, it was decided to handle it differently than previous disputes. I would say that decision set in course the events at Ipperwash.

The second piece of evidence I want to lay before the House is that we submitted what's called a freedom of information request to the government to try to find out the background evidence from the government. This request was submitted on November 13, 1996. It says that we want "all notes taken by individuals from the cabinet and Premier's office in attendance at the meetings of the interministerial committee for aboriginal emergencies between September 3, 1995, and October 1, 1995, as well as any formal minutes taken at the meetings."

Remember what I said earlier. This meeting took place on a daily basis. It was called a crisis by the government. The Premier's executive assistant was at those meetings every single day. The Premier's communications person was at those meetings every single day. The Cabinet Office was at those meetings every single day. Particularly after that shooting on September 6, this turned into a crisis.

We were astonished. In fact, I ask the public whether you could believe the response we got, and that is that

there were no records from the cabinet or the Premier's office. They came back saying, "Sorry, we have no records about Ipperwash either in the Premier's office or in the Cabinet Office." We couldn't believe it, and so we sent another letter to the freedom of information office on January 6, 1997. The original response came December 11.

We said: "You responded that all these records originated from either the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat or the Ministry of Natural Resources. Specifically what we want to know is, are you saying that no one from the Premier's office or Cabinet Office took any notes at those meetings? No one from the Premier's office or Cabinet Office sent any e-mail or memorandum related to the issues arising out of these meetings or the events at Ipperwash, and no notes have been taken?"

We got an answer back saying, "Apart from the records referred to above" — that is, from the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat and the Ministry of Natural Resources — "neither the Cabinet Office nor the Premier's office has custody or control of any records responsive to the request."

In simple, plain language, what the Premier's office told the freedom of information people is that he has in his office no records from those daily meetings that took place starting on September 5, where his executive assistant, on his behalf, went to those meetings dealing with what had to be the most serious situation facing the Premier certainly up to that period of time.

A huge issue, a first nations person shot, a crisis, 250 OPP officers on the site, armoured personnel carriers being called in, armoured helicopters being called in, officers from around the province speeding to Ipperwash, an international incident, and yet the Premier in response to a question in the House, when we asked, "Is it possible that no one from your office ever wrote a memo, a file, a briefing note?" Mr Harris said: "You make up imaginary files. There were no files, there were no records, because we had no involvement."

1700

I ask the public to think about this for a moment: daily meetings of a crisis of the most significant proportions, sufficient that cabinet was called to emergency meetings, sufficient that I don't think there has been an incident where more OPP officers were located on one site — full armour, armoured carriers being brought from army bases, an enormous crisis.

The Premier has said to us and the people of Ontario: "I have no records, no files. No one on my staff, no one in the cabinet office ever wrote a memo, a briefing note." Really, can anybody believe that? Can anybody in the public accept what Premier Harris told us in the House, that no one ever wrote a memo or a note?

It is just too incredible to believe. It cannot have happened. As a matter of fact, the minutes of the one meeting we do have says that one of the roles of the people at those meetings was to go back and inform their ministers.

What we're being asked to believe is that for a full month, with full crisis, no one in the Premier's office ever wrote a briefing note. If you wonder why we in the opposition, why the first nations people, why people who

look at this are so suspicious, I cannot believe for a moment that when the Premier's staff left those meetings, they didn't write a memo, they didn't go back and inform the Premier, they didn't go back and say, "Here's what took place, Premier," and they didn't prepare memos for them.

The third thing I want to talk about again is evidence. I wish we had a chance to lay this before a judge, an independent inquiry. Wherever and at any time, we would be pleased to do it. The shooting took place the evening of Wednesday, September 6, at roughly 11 o'clock at night. What was the headline in the local Sarnia paper that day on September 6? Actually, Mr Beaubien faxed the paper to the Premier's office, perhaps proud of it, I don't know. Here's what he faxed to the Premier's office. This is from Marcel Beaubien to the Premier's office: "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line Against Park Occupiers. Beaubien." That appeared literally hours before the shooting.

The reason I raise it is because the Premier said in the House: "The OPP handled this all on their own. We had nothing to do with it." Again, why would Mr Beaubien be saying, government "to take hard line against park occupiers"?

When the Premier says the government had nothing to do with this, imagine this: The police log showed this clearly and Mr Beaubien himself, the Conservative member for the area, has confirmed on at least three occasions he personally was at the police command post before the shooting. That to me is unacceptable. Here we have our police trying to handle a most sensitive situation, and appearing at the police command post was the local Conservative member. The records will show — the police records, the command post file, and we've tabled that information — that Mr Beaubien said, "I have been in touch with the Premier, with the Solicitor General and with the Attorney General." On three different occasions he was there, including, I might add, four hours before the fatal shooting.

If the government is saying the OPP handled this all on their own, the pressure that was put on the OPP — they couldn't have missed the headline in the Sarnia paper that day, hours before the shooting: "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line." They couldn't have missed the fact that Mr Beaubien — Mr Beaubien, by the way, faxed to the Premier, and I'm sure let the local police know his intentions, his press release of September 5. He says: "We're not dealing with decent native citizens, we're dealing with thugs.... Enough is enough.... Where's the leadership, not only from provincial officials but from federal officials?"

My point is this: The Premier has said that it was left entirely in the OPP's hands, yet the evidence is that it wasn't: at the police command post, Mr Beaubien, at least three times, his intentions known, saying he's talking to the Premier, the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. All of this is fact. All of this is there in hard evidence by the OPP itself, that we would be pleased to present at any time to an independent commission.

I go on to further evidence of interference at Ipperwash, and that is from another police log. This took

place at 2141 on September 6; that is at about 20 minutes to 10. The shooting took place at 11 o'clock that evening. This is a transcript of a discussion between the command officer, Inspector Linton, and his superintendent, Mr Parkin, less than two hours before the shooting. Mr Linton is going over what is happening, and what's happening is that the government has decided to seek an injunction, and this is what the superintendent says: "Well, that injunction surprises me, because the one that we were going for, I guess John told you" — point number 1, that what the OPP wanted to do was different than what the government decided to do.

It goes on to say that "something went up the MNR side.... that must have been from Mr Kobayashi." Then they go on to say, "The next thing, it was sitting in the Deputy Solicitor General's office, so there was concern that, you know, maybe we weren't doing the right thing."

Now, what that says is that there was a Ministry of Natural Resources person hanging around the police command post reporting rumours to the government and the government was responding to these rumours, and we have the police commander saying the government is worried that, "you know, maybe we weren't doing the right thing."

1710

Then it goes on to say, "Marcel Beaubien was in tonight. He had talked to the Solicitor General." Further evidence of Mr Beaubien, the Conservative member, at the headquarters. He talked to the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. "They were comfortable" but "we called the commissioner tonight and he had been talking to Runciman and they were more than pleased with what the OPP was doing, so there's no problem there. What happened though, by that information about the...weapons going up the MNR side, they went from that regular type of injunction to the emergency type, which you know isn't really in our favour." "Yeah." "We want a little bit more time."

I hope the public picks up on the language there. What we have are the two senior OPP officers, the commanding officer and the commanding officer's superintendent saying, "Government interference here. They've gone after a different type of injunction than we've been expecting. It really isn't in our favour," ie, not in the OPP's favour. "We want a little bit more time." Then they go on to say "but they've gone for that, and that's why these papers must come down tonight for us to serve." and "You know, this is typical, where we get kinda caught, and ultimately the ball's gonna be in our lap anyway."

I use that as further evidence of the government interference. Here we have the OPP trying to deal with a tough, sensitive situation, and yet here is hard evidence that the government had decided. With the minister's consultation, there had been a cabinet meeting that morning where this was discussed, and they've decided to take a different course of action than the OPP had been expecting or wanting.

You can see the language here. First, "There was concern we weren't doing the right thing." In other words, the police felt the government was looking over their shoulder on a constant regular basis. Evidence that

what Mr Harris, the Premier, has told us in the House is contradicted by police records. It goes on to say that "they went from that regular type of injunction to the emergency type, which you know isn't really in our favour," and "We want a little bit more time." I table that as further evidence that contradicts what Premier Harris has said in the House: "No, no, the OPP handled this all on their own. We had nothing to do with it."

I want to go on to a further issue — which I'll find in a moment; here it is, here and here. One of the key reasons why the first nations entered the park to take it over was because they believed there was a sacred burial ground there. They felt it was being desecrated and they felt a need to go in and to secure it. On October 31 we raised this in the Legislature, saying one of the reasons the first nations went into that park and occupied it was that they believed there was a sacred burial ground within the boundary of that park. The Attorney General said, "That isn't why they went into the park." Well, that is why they went into the park. The newspaper accounts on the days before indicate that's why they went in.

What happened afterwards? There were 43 charges laid against the first nations as a result of that incident in the park that night — 43 charges including assault, assault with a deadly weapon and something called forcible entry. What happened? Let me tell you about 40 of those charges. The Ministry of the Attorney General dropped those charges. Why? Because — this is legal jargon — colour of right, that there was a burial ground there. They went into court and said, "We are dropping the charges." This letter, on Ministry of Attorney General letterhead, says:

"The crown has confirmed the existence of correspondence made in 1937 between the federal Indian Affairs branch and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, which refers to 'the old Indian cemetery which...is located within the territory now being developed as a park' (referred to now as Ipperwash Provincial Park). This documentation gives objective support for the reasonableness and the honesty of the accused's belief.

"Further, it has been clearly indicated by the Provincial Division judges at pretrials that this defence will succeed in all instances when it is raised.

"Accordingly, this 'colour of right' defence is of sufficient significance that the crown concludes that there is no reasonable prospect of conviction. The crown therefore must withdraw all forcible detainer charges."

That is an admission by the government that those first nations people had a legitimate right to occupy the park. They had a legitimate right to believe there was a sacred burial ground there. Perhaps the biggest tragedy, although there are many tragedies here, is that the government knew weeks before this occupation took place that they were going to occupy the park at some time and that they were going to occupy the park because of that belief about a sacred burial ground.

If that had been taken seriously and if the government had said, "Let's do a thorough investigation of this to find out whether there's any evidence for that claim," I guarantee that this situation would have been handled totally differently. But it didn't take place. The claim was dismissed. As recently as October 1996, tragically, the

Attorney General was still saying, "That isn't why they went in there."

I would just say to the public that every single charge against the first nations as a result of that incident has now been dropped or they were found innocent. I would say as an aside — I hope I can find the thing I want. I found it offensive. Here it is.

We heard earlier today that the government won't discuss this issue because it's before the courts, but the very day that the OPP constable went on trial, the very day that took place, the Premier — the headline here is "Ipperwash Group was Breaking Law, Premier Says." That was April 1, 1997. That was exactly the day the trial of the police officer started. I found it extremely offensive, because the government itself had dropped all the charges. The Premier said they were breaking the law, an illegal occupation of the park, but the government had dropped the charges because it agreed they had a legitimate defence for being there.

I found it offensive for two reasons, first that the Premier was still saying they were guilty of breaking the law when the government itself had dropped the charges, saying they were innocent. Frankly, if you're looking for a lawsuit with the Premier, there is a classic case where he's saying, "You're guilty," after he and the government claimed and acknowledged they were innocent. The other thing I found offensive is that the Premier has said, "We can't comment on this thing because it's before the courts," but he certainly was able to comment on April 1 that this Ipperwash group was breaking the law.

1720

The reason I go through all of these is that for the public watching this and interested in this issue, this is a symbol of how we deal with our first nations and it is a symbol of how this government deals with its first nations. Surely we can't let this simply be ignored. Our first nations have every right to demand a public inquiry, and I go through the evidence, which is not hearsay, it's not rumour; it is the government's own documents.

Just to refresh our memory, the Premier has said their own interministerial group made the key decision, "We are going to ignore the native claim." God knows there is and was a legitimate first nations claim on this area, but, "No, we're going to treat this as a trespass and we have made the decision to get them out of that park as soon as possible." That was the first tragic mistake.

Second, does anybody in this province believe that this group that met, meets — here's what it's called: "the Ipperwash incident crisis communications procedures and contact list...this system for managing this interministerial crisis." It goes on to say: "Members of the core working group, meetings will be held daily. These meetings will be in the executive boardroom. On the weekends, calls will be made on Saturday and Sunday at specific times as initiated by the chairperson. The core working group will maintain a daily log of events citing the specific incident." Then it goes on to say the Premier's executive assistant and the Premier's press office and the Cabinet Office are on that.

We've been told that in spite of the fact that that group met daily dealing with this crisis, all three of those people never, ever once wrote a memo, an e-mail, a file,

a briefing note. That's what the Premier says. Can anybody believe that? Yet that's what we're being told and that's what the first nations are being told. The Premier says it was left to the OPP.

Hours before the shooting, Mr Beaubien's comments are in the local paper: "We're going to take a hard line with the natives at the park." Does that tell you they kept hands off? The government said, "They didn't go in there because they believed there was a sacred burial ground," and then the government had to drop all the charges because of what is called "colour of right," the evidence that there was strong evidence of a burial ground in there.

The police log showed they were constantly being forced to deal with a Mr Beaubien, a Conservative member, at their headquarters, that he said he was talking to the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. That is unacceptable. We cannot have politicians at police command posts. You can imagine the abuse that can take place if that's acceptable behaviour in this province. We can't let that happen. But the Premier and the Solicitor General have both said this is acceptable behaviour. It is unacceptable. You're placing the police in an impossible position.

The crisis plan clearly indicates the government viewed this as a crisis of the highest order. Surely memos were in the Premier's office, but he denies they exist.

For all those reasons I charge the government with blatant interference. I will say that in the House and I will say that in the hall. I will say that anywhere. I will challenge them to give us a forum to lay this evidence before anybody, any judge, a legislative committee. I think a judicial inquiry is what's required.

I asked them to table the legal opinion that says we can't proceed with an inquiry and they refused to do that. There is an issue that we in this Legislature cannot ignore. We owe it to our first nations, we owe it to ourselves, to have a full public airing of this very sorry situation.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I rise to support the motion standing in the name of the member for Rainy River. I join my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt and others who have spoken this afternoon from this side of the House to raise the concern that I believe most, if not all, members feel about the fact that on our watch, during the early part of this Parliament, a native Canadian living in southwestern Ontario, Dudley George, was killed. That's the first time that's happened in the history of this province. That is an unprecedented and a very serious situation.

I don't intend today to stand and rethrash the evidence that has been advanced by the previous speaker, my colleague Mr Phillips, or Mr Wildman or Mr Ramsay, who spoke earlier this afternoon. I just simply want to make a couple of observations beyond saying that this is very serious, very unprecedented and that we owe it to the community at large and most especially to the family of Dudley George to provide more and better answers than have been provided to date, especially since we now have the ruling of at least one independent judge who has heard some of the testimony and made a very important finding with respect to various aspects of this case.

I want to say this afternoon that on this matter I have listened carefully to what I have been told by the Attorney General and by the Premier, the leader of the government. Had I not spent time in government, did I not know about the competence and the thoroughness of people like Deb Hutton, I might come to a different conclusion than I am inclined to now take. I know and I have a great deal of respect for Deb Hutton. I know a lot about the current leader of this government. I know something about his developed views vis-à-vis the aboriginal community. I know perhaps more than I want to know about Mike Harris and his views on native Canadians living in this province.

I have seen my friend the Premier at public meetings in my community. I've read about his views up in Peterborough late in October 1994. I ask myself, "What would somebody with those views do if he had the opportunity to run the government of Ontario?" Then I ask myself, "Is it possible that government has changed to such an extent since the days when I was there that" — and I say this very seriously to my friend from St Catharines, and I say it of myself, not of him, because I've had the opportunity to serve in government. Coming from that experience, I have to tell you that I cannot believe what I'm being asked to believe by Premier Harris and the Attorney General, for, among other reasons, my knowledge of the thoroughness and the competence of Deb Hutton. That she was at those meetings and that she did not pass back to her boss what was going on is, from my experience in government, absolutely and transparently incredible. I say that only from my own personal experience and my own very high regard for, among other people, Deb Hutton.

Then I ask myself the other question, "On this matter, given what's happened here, do I want to be Ward Cleaver and give a very generous benefit of the doubt, or do I want to be I.F. Stone and be very sceptical of what might have been done by the leadership of the Ontario government?" I ask myself, "Is there any precedent in the history of my province that might give me some reason to be I.F. Stone the sceptic, not Ward Cleaver the happy, generous giver of the benefit of the doubt to all authority?"

1730

I want to take a few moments this afternoon to draw the attention of the House to an excellent memoir by David Lewis, published about the time of his death in 1981, called *The Good Fight*. In that book there is a chapter which I recommend to everyone, chapter 12, called "The Gestapo Affair."

Very briefly, what that deals with is a very controversial set of circumstances in the Ontario general election that was held 52 years ago today, June 4, 1945. In that campaign, the Leader of the Opposition, Ted Jolliffe, went on radio on May 24 and accused the then Premier of Ontario, George Drew, of maintaining a special branch of the OPP at 18 Surrey Place, just across the street from where we now sit, the so-called special branch that the Leader of the Opposition said was spying on the CCF and the labour movement in Ontario, and that not only were the provincial police force spying, but that they were causing that spy material to get into the hands of, as

Mr Lewis says, virulent anti-CCF propagandists like Gladstone Murray, among others.

Mr Drew denied absolutely any knowledge of anything. To his credit, he appointed a royal commission that made a finding in his favour. Thirty-five years later, a very distinguished Canadian academic, Alan Whitehorn, in preparing these memoirs, got into the Drew papers. Professor Whitehorn found very clear evidence that Colonel George Alexander Drew, Premier of Ontario, appeared — more than appeared — to have perjured himself before that royal commission. You can read chapter 12 of this book with all of the documentary evidence that a very distinguished and thorough Ontario academic has advanced.

I make the point that there is a case where in a somewhat similar matter an Ontario Premier apparently did not tell nearly the whole truth of what he knew and what he did in a matter that was very important to our democracy here in Ontario. Could it happen again? Did it happen again? I don't know, but when I read this chapter 12, the so-called Gestapo affair as reported in the David Lewis memoir published 15 years ago, I'll tell you, that more than anything else makes me want to be I.F. Stone, not Ward Cleaver, and that's why I support this resolution today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased to be able to speak on this motion, partly because I come from southwestern Ontario, partly because I know members of the George family well, partly because Ipperwash Provincial Park is one of the places that I remember very well from my childhood as a wonderful location, and partly because it is always important that we stand in this place and demand the truth.

This is a very serious issue, and it distresses me that the government has taken the tack that it has taken, frankly right from the beginning, on matters that concern native people in this province. It is quite, quite clear that in many statements there has been little, if any, understanding about the complexity of the land claim issues that native people have in this province and little or no sympathy for the reality that our inability as communities to deal with the very real problems of aboriginal neighbours has created for us an ongoing black eye not only in our own communities but quite frankly across the world.

Is quite clear that we as Canadians get very upset when other nations treat groups of people in unfair ways and bring undue force against them when they are attempting to assert their rights, and yet here we have an example in the province of Ontario that is being used worldwide as an example of how Canada has no right to be self-righteous and how Ontario has slipped into this whole way of dealing with problems.

It's fitting that today is not only the anniversary that Mr Conway, the member from Renfrew, mentioned in his speech, but is also the anniversary of Tiananmen Square: people trying to assert themselves, assert their democratic rights, being crushed by government. I don't think it's too far-fetched for us — all of us remember that sole person standing in front of the tank in Tiananmen Square. Well, the native people in Ipperwash, native people across this

country, see Dudley George in much the same way. That image of what happened that night at Ipperwash will forever taint the relationship between native people and their government here in this place and frankly in our national government unless there is a committed effort to expose the truth of what happened, to take responsibility, to ensure that there is accountability, and then to see some commitment to change on the part of this government.

I've been an Attorney General and I confess myself quite amazed at the line the Attorney General has taken. I have no doubt he has legal advice that supports his line, but I also have no doubt he has another whole set of legal advice that tells him that if he were prepared to have a public inquiry, this is how he would go about it in order to avoid the problems with the criminal process and, I would suggest, the civil process, which quite frankly I think is a much bigger problem for this government than the criminal process. The criminal process will go on. In fact, many of the decisions have already been made. I believe this government is much more fearful of the consequences of the civil process.

I can say quite clearly, as the George family have said, that the longer you stonewall on this issue, the worse that liability will become and the more intransigent that family will become in seeking justice. Why? It is because this is a group of people who felt they were simply maintaining their rights. Even the Attorney General's ministry agreed, in the criminal cases cited by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, that they had reason to believe they had right in terms of the burial ground.

It's also amazing to me, just amazing, that members of this government are not upset by the involvement of one of their own backbenchers in this whole affair. Those of us who come from southwestern Ontario know very clearly about the animosity among some citizens in the area of Ipperwash over land claims by the Stony Point and Kettle Point people. We know that very well. We know they have formed a very powerful group to defend themselves and their own rights, because they of course have competing rights to land that they have lived on, that they have built on, that they've invested in over many years. So what we have are two groups of citizens with competing rights.

What is the job of someone elected to this place from that community? The job of a legislator is to be there on behalf of all the citizens of the constituency, not just one group with which he happens to have identified. The reality is that the statements from the member for Lambton, some of which my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt read out but others of which all of us in southwestern Ontario heard on the radio and on television, were extremely inflammatory. I was on a talk show radio program with him a week after this tragic occurrence on which he in very loud and definite terms said, "The job of government is to move in and stop the problem when someone breaks the law." I might say that the radio talk show host, who is not known to be a friend of mine, said to him very clearly, "What law are they supposed to have broken?" "Well, they were trespassing in the park."

1740

Let's look at the absurdity of bringing in the TRU team, the tactical response unit, for a case of trespass.

Why do we have a TRU team? Why do they have expensive training? Why do they have the kind of focused attention they have? Because there are instances when we require highly specialized, highly focused police officers to go into a situation where they have only one job.

Let's look at a hostage situation. That's where you mostly see the TRU team. Someone goes berserk in their house or someplace else, takes someone else or a number of other people hostage, and it becomes an issue of how you get those people out of there safely. There's always a police effort made to try negotiation, try negotiation, try negotiation, wait them out, starve them out, try to be affable to the needs of the person holding those people prisoner. But eventually, if intelligence tells you there is a definite danger to someone, then the TRU team is called in. Their job is to minimize casualties and to protect those who are there to the extent they can, but basically to end the situation.

What we have here is a situation that is totally foreign to the way the OPP have ever operated in the past when it has come to a peaceful occupation of any kind of land, to a peaceful blockade of any kind of transportation route, and we have had many instances of that.

We are in a situation where large tracts of land all over this province are under land claims by native people. They are understandably upset that they are making no progress in terms of those land claim negotiations. They certainly won't now, with a pared-down native affairs ministry that has no money to conduct any negotiations and certainly no funding available to them to give the kind of compensation that all of us would require if we felt our land had been unlawfully taken from us.

We have a situation not six weeks after land was taken, but two days. We have a situation where there were no hostages. The people who went into the park carefully waited until the season was up. There were no campers. They carefully did this knowing that it would not be appropriate for them to put anyone else in danger. They were simply, with their bodies and their presence, saying, "This burial ground is ours by right, and until you talk to us about it, federal and provincial government, this is where we stay."

They had done that some weeks earlier with the army camp after years and years and years of effort to get back their own land, which was expropriated during the war for a base. I know when I was a child growing up in the 1950s and going to Ipperwash that those were early days, and the pain of the Stony Point people looking at their land being systematically destroyed by the use of shells, by the kind of training that went on at that place, was etched in my memory in the 1950s. It was a very, very sad occurrence.

We have a situation where there were no hostages, there were no threats being issued against anybody who lived in the area. My friend from Kirkland Lake is wrong. He suggested that the cottagers couldn't get to their cottages. That's not the case. There was no road blockade. Entrance and egress were not being blocked — nothing like that.

There were names being called. People were angry. I must say that if you read the press, the names that were

being called were equally unacceptable on both sides. The inflammatory nature of the comments from some of the non-native inhabitants of the area, not just in those days but since, have given rise to great fear on the part of native people and their supporters in the area about whether reconciliation can ever be found, and the longer this matter goes on, the worse that hostility becomes.

The family of Dudley George, a large, extended family, many of whom have been committed to obtaining the return of their land, the Stony Point land — in fact, I first met members of the George family when their father was making an effort to get the previous Conservative federal government to negotiate with the Stony Pointers the return of that land — all of that family feels they have been abandoned not only by their government but by people they would have assumed would understand them to be their constituents, in particular the member for Lambton.

When the member for Scarborough-Agincourt says this is an international incident, it is an international incident because many of the native people across North America do not regard the borders we have set up between the United States and Canada as borders which have anything to do with them. They see themselves as citizens of North America, not particularly as citizens of Canada, so the shame of this incident has spread far and wide throughout North America.

Mr Wildman: And to the United Nations.

Mrs Boyd: And to the United Nations, as my colleague from Algoma points out. You will all be aware of the delegation that has gone to the Queen around these unresolved native issues, and to the United Nations.

Yet we have a government that persists in trying to hide behind the reason they can't go into this in any depth being ongoing court cases, even though the Supreme Court has ruled on that matter and has ruled against that position, even though we are not putting a time limit on this motion, are not asking for this inquiry to begin until those matters have been resolved.

The Supreme Court has said it's okay to go ahead with criminal and civil matters pending if what you are trying to determine is what the role of government was and what the accountability of government is. We also have the situation where we are not even requiring that of this government. What we are requiring on behalf of the George family, on behalf of all native citizens in this province, is that we get to the bottom of why on September 6, two days after a group of native people calmly occupied a deserted park, a park that was about to be closed for the winter, we have the TRU teams surrounding them, we have the armed forces on alert, we have a whole buildup of a police action that, frankly, looked like Waco, Texas.

We have a situation of a government that made a decision about how it was going to show it was tough on native people and that it was law-and-order, without regard for what was going on in terms of native land claims, and that's all we had.

1750

There is no explanation for the change in policy or procedure on the part of the OPP and we all know that police officers follow orders. We all know that they are

trained to follow orders and we all know that the order was given — it's in the papers that have been obtained — "Get the Indians out of the park as soon as possible." That's an order and it is quite clear that although — and time will tell whether this is true or not — there is some defensiveness that they weren't told how to get those folks out of the park, we will see whether that's true or not once we finally get this matter inquired into in some detail. Even if they weren't told how, they were told that that was a top priority and had to be done immediately.

What we have is a situation where this government is allowing the police to carry the can for a terrible, tragic incident, and one police officer in particular. I believe very strongly that in this matter it is in the best interests of everyone, including the government, to air this matter. When I was counselling battered women, one of the ways in which I tried to help them understand how burying problems, burying mistakes created a problem, was to say, "You know, it's like when instead of throwing your trash down the garbage chute, you put it in a cupboard, and you keep putting it in a cupboard and it gets full and it begins to do what garbage always does. It festers and it ferments and eventually it bursts right out of the closet."

That's what's going to happen in this matter. The longer this goes on, the higher the stench becomes. The Premier stood in this place and said he didn't know anything about any faxes and there weren't any faxes. He looked and there weren't any faxes. And then we found out there was a fax.

Each piece of information that comes out calls into question the integrity of this government, and your only way to deal with it, quite frankly, is to admit that you made a mistake, is to say, "Okay, you're right, we need to get the fresh air at the garbage that has gone on around Ipperwash and find out how we can get back to a situation where we're trying to resolve problems," instead of creating new ones every day by the kind of intransigence that was expressed by your Attorney General today.

There is absolutely no reason in the world why this government, if it truly wants the truth to be out, could not say, "We are following legal advice that we cannot have a public inquiry until all legal and civil matters are dealt with, but as soon as they are, you have our full commitment to call an inquiry." That's all we're asking. That's all we've been asking for almost two years.

Mr Wildman: The truth shall set ye free.

Mrs Boyd: The truth always sets us free because there's nothing more to hide. There are no more little holes to patch up and if the front benches of your government are not responsible enough to take this action, it is too bad that more of you on the back bench are not prepared to act as independent members, as your member for Nepean wants us all to be, independent members who see this place as the rightful place where we should be able to express our views.

You have been muzzled by your Attorney General this afternoon. He announced there would be no speakers, and I see some of you sitting there and I know you're dying to speak. You may not want to speak in a way that I would want to hear, and that may indeed be why you've been muzzled. I don't know, but it is very important on

this matter that you understand it will come home to roost.

When it comes home to roost, it will foul your nest as badly as it has fouled the nest of the member for Lambton and as badly as I believe it will foul the nest of your cabinet. If you are seen to be acceding to hushing up a death that could have and should have never happened. It is not acceptable in this province for this kind of behaviour to go unexamined.

The court has found that there were no weapons in case after case after case. The court has found that there is no evidence to support the claims there were shots fired. The court has found that in fact there is no case of trespass against large numbers of those who were tried. The court has found that people were justified in their actions when they did behave in a way that was assaultive in order to protect somebody else.

Something stinks here, and it's very, very important for us to be very clear that the only way to stop the stench from growing, to stop the garbage from fermenting, is to get the light and the fresh air at it. The way to do that is to test the assertions of this Attorney General and this Premier and this Solicitor General and this Minister of Natural Resources, and to clearly test it by subpoena, under oath, in a court of law or in a public inquiry. The courts of law have already found that there was no justification. It is time for us now to be very clear that there must be a public inquiry to clear the air and clear the name of Dudley George.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Is there any more time left, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: No, I don't think so. No, there's no more time.

Mr Bradley: The reason is I was just going to ask if any of the government members wanted to speak.

The Speaker: Oh no, you're out of order.

Mr Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1758 to 1803.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Boyd, Marion	Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	McLash, Frank
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Morin, Gilles E.
Castrilli, Annamarie	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances	Wildman, Bud
Cordiano, Joseph	Laughren, Floyd	Wood, Len

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Rollins, E.J. Douglas
Boushy, Dave	Hudak, Tim	Ross, Lillian
Brown, Jim	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Saunderson, William
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Shea, Derwyn
Danford, Harry	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Doyle, Ed	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Flaherty, Jim	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fox, Gary	Leach, Al	Tsubouchi, David H.
Froese, Tom	Leadston, Gary L.	Tumbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Martiniuk, Gerry	Villeneuve, Noble
Grimmett, Bill	McLean, Allan K.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Guzzo, Garry J.	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Young, Terence H.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 45.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1806.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Corwall	Cleary, John C. (L)		Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	London South / -Sud	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Markham	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamaria (L)		Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Middlesex	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Eglinton	Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Baird, John R. (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Nepean	Maves, Bart (PC)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Niagara Falls	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Niagara South / -Sud	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Nickel Belt	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Nipissing	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)		Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Norfolk	Carr, Gary (PC)
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Northumberland	Colle, Mike (L)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Oakville South / -Sud	Vacant
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Oakwood	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Oriele	Patten, Richard (L)
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Oshawa	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa East / -Est	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)	Ottawa-Rideau	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	
Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)	Oxford	

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Parkdale	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Scarborough North / -Nord	Curling, Alvin (L)
Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Simcoe East / -Est	McLean, Allan K. (PC)
Port Arthur	Gravelle, Michael (L)	Simcoe West / -Ouest	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health ministre de la Santé
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Victoria-Haliburton	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Renfrew North / -Nord	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Wellington	Armott, Ted (PC)
St Andrew-St Patrick	Bassett, Isabel (PC)	Wentworth East / -Est	Doyle, Ed (PC)
St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)	Wentworth North / -Nord	Skarica, Toni (PC)
St Catharines-Brock	Froese, Tom (PC)	Willowdale	Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
St George-St David	Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Wilson Heights	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Windsor-Riverside	Vacant
Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-Sandwich	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)	Windsor-Walkerville	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Newman, Dan (PC)	York Centre / -Centre	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	York East / -Est	Parker, John L. (PC)
Scarborough-Ellesmere	Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York Mills	Turnbull, David (PC)
		York-Mackenzie	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: E.J. Douglas Rollins
Dave Boushy, Robert Chiarelli, David Christopherson,
Bruce Crozier, Jim Flaherty, Douglas B. Ford,
Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos, Gerry Martiniuk,
David Ramsay, E.J. Douglas Rollins, Lillian Ross,
Bob Wood, Terence H. Young
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Rick Bartolucci
Rick Bartolucci, Marcel Beaubien, Gilles Bisson,
Michael A. Brown, John C. Cleary, Ed Doyle,
Bill Grimmer, Morley Kells, Gerard Kennedy,
Frances Lankin, Trevor Pettit, Frank Sheehan,
Bill Vankoughnet, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Rosemarie Singh

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Finances et affaires économiques**

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Gary Carr, Joseph Cordiano, Monte Kwinter, Tony Martin,
Gerry Martiniuk, Gerry Phillips, Gilles Pouliot,
E.J. Douglas Rollins, Wayne Wettlaufer, Terence H. Young
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Barbara Fisher, Tom Froese, Steve Gilchrist,
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Mario Sergio, R. Gary Stewart, David Tilson, Len Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tony Silipo
John R. Baird, Rick Bartolucci, Brenda Elliott,
Douglas B. Ford, Michael Gravelle, Garry J. Guzzo,
Bert Johnson, Peter Kormos, Floyd Laughren,
Frank Miclash, Peter L. Preston, Tony Silipo,
R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Gary Fox
John R. Baird, Tony Clement, Alvin Curling,
Gary Fox, Ernie Hardeman, Ron Johnson,
Margaret Marland, Allan K. McLean, Gilles E. Morin,
Sandra Pupatello, Tony Silipo, Joseph N. Tascona,
David Tilson, Bud Wildman
Clerk / Greffier: Peter Sibenik

Ombudsman

Chair / Président: John R. O'Toole
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Trevor Pettit
Dave Boushy, Bruce Crozier, Pat Hoy, Ron Johnson,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Gary L. Leadston, Rosario Marchese,
Allan K. McLean, Bill Murdoch, John R. O'Toole,
Jerry J. Ouellette, John L. Parker, Trevor Pettit, Len Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Franco Carrozza

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Richard Patten
Gary Fox, Bernard Grandmaître, Bill Grimmer,
Helen Johns, Jean-Marc Lalonde, Shelley Martel,
Bill Murdoch, Richard Patten, Gilles Pouliot,
Peter L. Preston, Sandra Pupatello, Derwyn Shea,
Toni Skarica, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Marcel Beaubien
Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien, Gilles Bisson,
Tony Clement, Carl DeFaria, John Gerretsen,
Ernie Hardeman, Helen Johns, Gerard Kennedy,
Tony Martin, Tony Ruprecht, Derwyn Shea,
Frank Sheehan, Bill Vankoughnet
Clerk / Greffière: Rosemarie Singh

**Resources development /
Développement des ressources**

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Thursday 5 June 1997

Jeudi 5 juin 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 juin 1997

*The House met at 1002.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TARTAN ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE TARTAN

Mrs Ross moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 132, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario / Projet de loi 132, Loi visant à adopter un tartan officiel pour l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Mr Speaker, before I begin I wonder if I could ask for unanimous consent for the members to wear the swatches that are placed on their desks.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mrs Ross: It is with great pleasure that I open the debate in this House on my private member's bill. If passed, this proposed bill will establish an official tartan design or pattern as one of Ontario's provincial symbols, similar to the trillium or the amethyst.

I know members would agree with me that symbols are important in both our public as well as our private lives. Symbols represent our identity and how we understand each other and each other's values, now and in history. As such they are not simply reminders of the past; they are dynamic ideas that can inspire our imaginations with pride and guide us in how we continue to face the challenges of the present and the future.

Some may ask: Why a tartan as a symbol for Ontario? How may a tartan, an expression of Scottish culture, be a representative symbol for all Ontarians, given the reality of our multicultural society?

The answer to these questions is that an official tartan pays tribute to the many and varied contributions of Canadians of Scottish ancestry to Ontario and to Canada. Given the dynamic nature of the tartan itself, it can also form part of a meaningful heritage to those of us, myself included, who are not of Scottish ancestry.

Tartans are an ancient form of dress used by the Scottish highlanders. Consisting of a repeated chequered pattern of threads, it was and is worn by members of Scottish clans for purposes of identification with both the clan and the clan's territory. Tartans were first recorded in history by Julius Caesar in France, where he first observed Celtic tribes.

The tartan kilt, a pun or a play on the word "Celt," while looking like a type of skirt, is actually a descendant of the earlier battle garb that was worn by Roman soldiers. The tartan can also be worn in the form of a dress; a sash, similar to what I'm wearing; a scarf or tie, the tie being at one time simply a large bandage that crusaders wore around their necks to be prepared for any eventuality of being wounded.

There are different types of tartans that are used for different purposes. Dull-coloured hunting tartans were developed by clans to make them look less conspicuous while they were out hunting. Mourning tartans are worn at funerals and for all sad occasions. Apart from the familiar clan tartans, there are district tartans, which identify a person's residence in a certain district, whether the person belongs to the dominant clan or not.

There are many precedents in Scottish history and culture that show how people who are not related to clans by blood or ancestry can be identified with either clan or territory and may as a result wear the tartans associated with them quite meaningfully.

Smaller clans which did not have their own tartans often sought refuge and protection under greater clans and so were adopted by them. Scots who came from the lowlands or who were otherwise not entitled to a tartan of their own could always wear one of the universal tartans, including the Black Watch, the Jacobite or the Caledonia tartans.

It is perfectly legitimate for a subject of the Queen, for example, to wear the Royal Stewart tartan, regardless of his or her cultural background. Since this is the Queen's own tartan, the wearing of such is a demonstration of loyalty to the crown or to the royal Stewart line. As a matter of fact, my colleague Mr Al McLean is wearing the Stewart tartan today and I'm sure he'll address that when he speaks.

The Ontario tartan is a district tartan, as I have mentioned. It represents not the cultural or other ancestry of a people but the district or territory itself and those who reside within it, regardless of their background.

Since the Ontario tartan reflects territorial loyalties, it is as legitimate for an Ontarian of Scottish background to wear that tartan as it would be for an Ontarian of French, Polish, Hungarian or Italian background to wear it as well.

The Ontario tartan pays tribute to Canada's Scottish heritage and the impact of Scottish culture on our history and development as a nation. In fact, the tartan has always been numbered among Canada's official symbols, beginning with Nova Scotia, which received its armorial bearings from King Charles I. Canada's coats of arms have always contained Scottish symbols, like the unicorn, the thistle and others.

The tartan is therefore a historic, 350-year-old Canadian symbol that belongs, by right, to the common heritage of all citizens of Canada.

With the exception of the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and Newfoundland, all other provinces and territories of Canada have official tartans, including a number of municipalities and organizations. The nature of the tartan is such that a number of states in the US have adopted their own tartans and in fact an official tartan was developed especially for the bicentennial of the American Revolution.

The direct impact of Scottish culture on Canada has been and continues to be significant. Sir John A. Macdonald and other fathers of Canadian Confederation, who laid down the legal and legislative bases of the new nation of Canada, were Scots.

The University of Toronto was begun as King's College by Scots educators and community leaders. The Ontario Agricultural College was begun by a Scot named Fergus, who now has a town named after him. Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, was another famous Scot, as was Sir Allan MacNab who lived in Hamilton's famous Dundurn Castle.

In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find even one aspect of our history, culture, laws and government, indeed our way of life, that was not positively impacted by the Scots. This is a heritage of which all Ontarians of all cultural backgrounds can be justifiably proud.

1010

It was this heritage which led to the development of Canada's modern multicultural society, defined by the values of tolerance, understanding and mutual appreciation for our cultural distinctiveness. It was this heritage that laid the foundations for our province's growth and stability, foundations upon which we all are privileged to continue to build. In paying tribute to our Scottish heritage, we are thereby also paying tribute to all others who likewise have made and continue to make significant contributions to the life of our province.

Just as we are all the beneficiaries of the economic, educational and political contributions of Canadians of Scottish ancestry, so, with Bill 132, will we be able to celebrate the fact that that ancestry is part of our cultural identity as are other citizen cultures of Ontario.

The structure of the proposed Ontario tartan, as you will see by the sash that I'm wearing, is based loosely on the Macdonald of Clanranald tartan, the tartan of Sir John Sandfield Macdonald, the first Premier of the province. The subtle shades of green represent our province's forests and fields, while the red is symbolic of our first nations. The blue represents the waters of Ontario and the white line represents the sky above the province.

The tartan was designed by Mr James Macneil of Toronto in conjunction with the chair of Scottish studies at the University of Guelph, and Mr Macneil is in the gallery with us today. I thank him very much for helping me on this.

As a Canadian of Polish and Hungarian ancestry, I am proud to be Scottish by marriage. The clan of Ross is a deeply historic one in Scotland and was governed at one time by the famous King of Scots, Macbeth. It was William Ross who led the Ross clan at the battle of

Bannockburn and helped procure Scotland's independence.

The fact that one need not be Scottish to meaningfully wear a tartan, that the tartan in fact belongs to all the people, regardless of their background, who live in a territory is for me the most significant aspect of this symbol. It honours the contribution of one great community in Canada but allows all others to adopt it as their own.

In closing, I ask all members of the House to support this legislation. It is time, I believe, for Ontario to join most of the other provinces and territories in declaring an official district tartan in recognition of our vibrant Scottish heritage and as a vehicle of cultural sharing, understanding and participation by all Ontarians.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): As I sat here listening to Mrs Ross, I just wondered how many of the prominent Ontarians that she referred to — and of course the Scots are known for their frugality. As you know, I'm of Dutch birth and descent and we share an awful lot of that in common with the Scots — but I'm just wondering how many of these prominent Ontarians that she talked about would have agreed with the whole notion of giving people a tax cut when at the same time the province is still running a deficit. I am quite sure they would not agree with that.

Having said that, I've got to congratulate her on bringing this forward, because I think this is a good idea. As you know, I represent the riding of Kingston and The Islands, and of course we are very proud in Kingston and The Islands of having Sir John A. Macdonald as the first Prime Minister of Canada, as a member of both this Legislature and the Parliament of Canada for a number of years. Indeed, on June 6 every year, which happens to be tomorrow, we commemorate the anniversary of his death, when we all gather around his gravesite in the Cataract cemetery and once again relive some of the splendours that Sir John A. was involved in. We will all be there tomorrow at the 106th anniversary of his death, since he died in 1891.

Of course there are many other prominent Ontarians who weren't of the Conservative mould who also are of Scottish descent. One would just have to think of Sir Oliver Mowat, both of whose parents were Scottish. He, I believe, was the longest-serving Premier of this province, for some 24 years. He also happened to represent the Kingston area in the provincial Legislature, and we are extremely proud of the heritage that he brings to our area as well and to the province of Ontario.

Of course the person who comes to mind immediately when we think of Scottish heritage is Mitch Hepburn. His father was Scottish and his mother was Irish. It always reminds me of the anecdote that he used to tell. He showed up one day during a political campaign at a gathering on a farm and there were hundreds of people there. When it was his turn to speak he was asked to address the crowd. I guess he wasn't a very tall man and he wanted to make sure he could be seen by everybody. The only thing that was available was a manure-spreader. He jumped on top of the manure-spreader, looked at all of the people in the gathering and said, "You know, it was very nice for once to be able to stand on the Tory

platform.” That’s the sense of humour I’m afraid quite often is lacking nowadays.

Of course, there’s one other thing I want to say about the Scottish heritage that we are extremely proud of in my riding of Kingston and The Islands, and that’s Queen’s University, one of the oldest universities in Canada. I think it’s one of the renowned universities in Canada as well. It was founded by the Scottish back in 1841 and it has been going for 150 years.

As a matter of fact, this coming Monday, June 9, there will be a gathering of all of the people who have graduated from Queen’s University who have anything to do at Queen’s Park, whether they’re elected members or whether they’re staff people or whether they work for the various ministries. We certainly invite them to the reception that will be attended by both the chancellor of Queen’s University, Peter Loughheed, and the principal of Queen’s University, Bill Leggett, down in the dining room at about 5 o’clock.

Congratulations, Mrs Ross. I am more than pleased to support this particular motion.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I am very pleased to be able to represent my party this morning and to congratulate Mrs Ross on bringing forward this bill. Bill 132 is only surprising, in my view, because it hasn’t existed in Ontario earlier. It is indeed an important occasion for us all to celebrate the design of this wonderful tartan and the fact that we are discussing in this Legislature the importance of this kind of symbol in joining us together.

I am of Scottish heritage. My father’s family, named Watt, came from Huntly in Scotland in 1837 to Glengarry county, where the farm still belongs to the family. It’s one of those amazing things of heritage that even though that’s so far back, everyone still talks of Scotland as home, even though many haven’t visited. I have and my father did, but it is a very interesting tie that Scottish people in Canada have to what they regard as their homeland.

The wearing of the tartan is one of the ways in which people express that loyalty and that sense of pride and that sense of history, that sense of being rooted in a culture, in a people that has struggled hard always against inhospitable climate and very difficult land conditions to make a living, to raise families and to build communities.

When I was growing up our Scottish heritage was always present to us because my father loved the sound of bagpipes. He had played a snare drum in his high school and at Queen’s University in the pipe band and it was part of his blood. It became part of ours too because one of my memories is that my father would march up and down the living room with the latest baby on his chest, gently burping the baby to the sound of the pipes. So, when I hear the pipes, it has a very immediate effect on me, in a very visceral way, I should say.

Where we grew up, our holidays always had to be organized so that we could attend the Glengarry games at Maxville. In those days, of course, there was no Highway 401, so you took the long trip down Highway 2 on the way to Lancaster where our family was. Through town after town, we would see signs of the Scottish people who had come before and all along the St Lawrence had

built settlement after settlement. I think it becomes important for us to share that cultural experience.

When I was Minister of Education some years ago I was invited to the Charlottenburgh high school and I’d like to share with you that Charlottenburgh in Glengarry has a tradition that is of long standing. This was the high school that my father and his brothers and sisters and all my cousins attended. In Charlottenburgh high school they have all the tartans of all the clans of all the students in that school around the walls.

1020

In recent years, as we have become more and more aware of the necessity of being inclusive of other cultures, symbols of the many other cultures of the students have joined those tartans. So when the member for Hamilton West talks about this as being not something that is parochial or celebrates only one culture, she’s right, because it fits very well with other cultures. I would really encourage people to see that, because I think there are 23 other cultures represented by symbols that are important to them that have joined the clan tartans around the walls in the auditorium in the Charlottenburgh high school.

One of the things that is important about this notion of putting a district tartan for Ontario is this issue that others then have a right to wear it. Scots tend to be quite jealous about their tartans. As Watts, we are members of the Buchanan clan. Those of you who know your tartans know that the Buchanan tartan is very strongly yellow and red and orange, very bright and very noticeable, not at all what you would wear to hunt, for sure.

When I married, I married a Boyd, who of course is a member of the Stuart clan, and then there was an array of tartans that were available, from the brightness of the Royal Stewart to the Hunting Stewart to the Dress Stewart, all of those possible and indeed enjoyed by all of us. In my husband’s family, one of his cousins never appears in public without his Stewart tie. It’s sort of his trademark. So it is an enjoyable way of celebrating every day the kind of heritage that we have enjoyed in terms of being Scottish people.

When we think about the kinds of traditions we have, it helps us to remember the history out of which they arose. Indeed, the wearing of the tartan goes back to Roman times at least. Of course, if you talk to people who have done studies of the Picts and the Scots and the settlement of Britain and Scotland, Ireland and Wales, they talk about the various ways in which the brooch that attaches the tartan has significance. The whole way in which it’s worn has a difference, depending on what your function is at that particular time.

Just outside the cabinet room on this floor is a picture that, while it may have dubious artistic merit, certainly is a cultural reminder of the Scots who farmed this country. It shows a picture of a man in a kilt plowing the land, breaking the land early. It is a symbol right there for all of us as we walk by to remember that the kilt is not just a uniform, it’s not just for bands, it’s not just for dress occasions or for special occasions. The kilt was worn and continues by some people to be worn as an everyday form of dress, providing for those who are fond of wearing it a sense of freedom, warmth but ventilation.

Certainly when you see people who wear the kilt on a normal day-to-day basis, they do so with a sense of comfort and a sense of pride that is indeed pleasurable to watch.

Maybe it's because I come from the Buchanan clan and married into the Stuart clan that I find the design somewhat dark. It could be, but I don't think so. This is a non-partisan occasion, but it certainly has a lot of blue and green in it, which suits this government very well. We've all just come through a period of time when seas of blue and green were very visible, so I think it is rather fitting that the government of the day would choose to bring forward a tartan of this sort.

All teasing aside, the meaningfulness of the different threads and the way they are woven together and the way in which they join the symbolic meaning of the various colours is very important in tartans. We always had handy in our house Clans and Tartans of Scotland, a little handbook, and it was always a contest to try to identify the clan that was being represented by a particular tartan. We used to laugh, frankly, about district tartans, because they always confuse you, because they aren't clan-related; they are meant to be something that is symbolic of belonging to a broader community.

It is very important for people to understand that the creation of a district tartan, which all the citizens of Ontario can enjoy wearing, is something that will preserve the sense of Scottish culture but will also be much more inclusive than it is at present.

Because the British Empire spread far and wide across the world, it is not unusual in former colonies to see people who do not in their physical appearance resemble Scottish people wearing the kilt in bands and in marching order, showing that the heritage has been adopted right across the world. It is exciting to think that when we have special occasions in Ontario, it will be possible for us to have that kind of inclusive way of showing that Scottish culture is shared, perhaps not by blood but by choice, by people all over Ontario.

The home of my heart is Bruce county. Bruce county has a district tartan and they're very proud of their district tartan. My cottage is close to Kincardine, and those of you who know Kincardine may know that everything stops on Saturday night throughout the summer while the Kincardine pipe band marches up the street and then down the street, followed by all the citizens and certainly all the children. Then there's a pipe concert in the park.

Before there was a bypass for Kincardine, all the traffic on Highway 21 had to stop during that period of time, between 7 and 8 on a Saturday night in the summer. That was just taken for granted. People had to plan their trips so they wouldn't hit Kincardine when the pipe band was playing because it didn't matter how important it was, you simply didn't go through the town when the pipe band was playing.

What we see in that part of the country is a great pride among people from a varied heritage in that particular celebration. It is really quite a sight, and one I invite people to see. I see the member for Bruce isn't here today, and I'm sure she's sorry she's missing this discussion. If she were here, I would not have mentioned

this, because she would have had an opportunity to talk about her town of Kincardine and how proud they are of their Scottish heritage and the wearing of the tartan.

1030

Because the Kincardine Pipe Band is a regular band, they have chosen a tartan that they wear as a band, but in the summer one of the things they do is that anyone who is in the district who plays is invited to join the band. On Saturday nights you often see, of course, the members of the band with the band's tartan on, but you also see people with many different tartans. It's very interesting. People always ask the visitors what tartan they're wearing and why they're wearing it and a little bit about history. It really is very much a part, for those of us who are part of Scottish culture, to enjoy that kind of thing. It is good to see those traditions continued, and continued in the more inclusive way that you're suggesting in this bill.

I was very pleased that you'd clearly been coached, even though you're not of Scottish heritage yourself, to be very careful to talk about Scots and the Scottish as opposed to Scotch, because some people get confused. I can remember my father all his life reminding people that Scotch is a drink and a Scot is a person. You didn't fall into that trap, but it is one that you could easily fall into.

I'm very supportive of this. You have designed a beautiful tartan. I think it's one that all Ontarians can be proud of. I certainly hope we will pass this bill for first reading today and that you will have no difficulty persuading your House leader to bring it forward for second reading before the end of the term. I think it would be a very good thing for this to go through, and I certainly hope that all of us in this Legislature will be supportive.

In closing, I want to say to my colleague across the way, Mr McLean, that I was sorry we missed April 6, Tartan Day, this year. It kind of passed in a blur because we were all here for 24 hours a day and we missed the date. He's having an opportunity to wear his tartan jacket today and to celebrate his heritage today.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): It is a privilege to rise in support of private member's Bill 132, which is brought forward by my colleague the member for Hamilton West, Mrs Ross. It also gives me the opportunity to wear my Royal Stewart Scottish jacket, which my wife made for me. I'm proud to show it off because of the number of hours of work that went into making it. Not only that, but the McLean tartan is very close to the Royal Stewart tartan, so it is a bright colour also.

As a Scottish Canadian and a member of the Clan McLean, I want to congratulate you and thank you for bringing this bill forward, a bill that honours our province's Scottish history and the memory of so many Scots who helped settle Ontario and make it the great place it is today.

I know my colleague and fellow Scotsman the member for Grey-Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch, would have been pleased to stand and speak in support of this bill if he were able to be here today. Many of us remember when Bill Murdoch introduced a private member's bill in 1991 to officially recognize April 6 as Tartan Day in Ontario, as it already is in Nova Scotia, or "New Scotland" in English. His bill passed with unanimous consent in this

House, distinguishing April 6 as a day of historical significance to the Scottish community.

The tartan, as we have already heard from the member for Hamilton West, can represent a district in which one resides, and this is certainly the most ancient use of the tartan. The other familiar type is that of the clan tartan, such as that of McLean, to which I belong and whose tartan I am proud to wear. For me, as a Canadian of Scots background, the McLean tartan is a source of pride in what my ancestors accomplished both in Scotland and in Canada. Like its bright colours, the McLean tartan knits all McLeans together. That is what the tartan has always done for the Scots clans and districts. I support this bill because I believe that an Ontario tartan can help knit together Ontarians of many different backgrounds as a symbol shared in common by all.

Like so many Canadians, I too trace my ancestry far away from the shores of Canada. The McLeans came to Canada in 1832 and settled in Oro township, county of Simcoe. My tartan is a constant reminder to me of that fact.

Having held extensive lands in the western islands of Scotland, the McLeans fought many victorious battles. Fiercely loyal to their clan chief, seven McLean brothers once died during one battle, one after another, in defence of Hector McLean. As each one fell, he shouted, "Another for Hector." This became the war cry of the McLeans. In 1910, Sir Fitzroy McLean repurchased Duarte Castle, the ancient home of the McLean clan.

In 1804, in the pre-Confederation province of Upper Canada, one Allan McLean was elected as the representative for the county of Frontenac. He was re-elected three subsequent times, and in 1812 was elected to the Speaker's chair. Mr McLean was also among 16 lawyers appointed by Lieutenant Governor Simcoe with the purpose of establishing a core of accredited legal practitioners for Upper Canada.

At the outbreak of the War of 1812, Speaker McLean joined the provincial militia and served for the duration of the hostilities. In 1812 he was given the rank of lieutenant colonel of the first regiment of the Frontenac militia.

Upon his return to the Speaker's chair, McLean was put in charge of a Legislative Assembly that dealt with such matters as the establishment of a legislative library, the regulation of common or public schools, Upper Canada's commercial relationship with the United States, the commission responsible for roads, and the relationship between Upper and Lower Canada, or what are now Ontario and Quebec.

What strikes me about Speaker Allan McLean is how so many of the issues that occupied the business of the Legislative Assembly of the day, including the relationship between English and French Canada, continue to do so today in Ontario's Parliament.

I am proud that a McLean was here in Ontario in the latter part of the 18th century to establish our province's foundations side by side with Lieutenant Governor Simcoe. And I'm proud that I am able to follow in the footsteps of a McLean in this Legislative Assembly and work on behalf of the people who elected me, just as he did. The Ontario tartan will serve to remind me of the

great contribution of a McLean to the legislative tradition that continues here at Queen's Park.

I want to remind you all that once a year in Orillia we have the Scottish Festival. That is on July 20. There's a parade, and bagpipes from all over the county and other places in the province will be there, and they will have the drum major. It is a fascinating day to listen to the pipes and drums.

I want to thank the member for Hamilton West for bringing this resolution forward, and I hope we will also have unanimous consent on this bill.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): You may wonder why someone who is obviously of Italian descent would rise and not only compliment the member for Hamilton West for bringing this matter to the attention of the Legislature but indeed support the bill.

I do so for a number of reasons. The first and foremost is that half of my family is in fact steeped in Scottish history. The Carmichaels have a long-standing tradition. They trace their name back to Mary Carmichael, a handmaiden to Mary, Queen of Scots. That's how far back the name goes. The current lord of the manor of the Carmichael clan still presides over the clan, which is now dispersed all over the world, in a town called Carmichael by Biggar in the south of Scotland. So it is with some pride that I rise to commend the member.

The first Carmichaels in Ontario traced their roots to about 150 years ago with a Duncan Carmichael, who came to settle in Ontario. You will find Carmichaels everywhere, from the Bruce Peninsula, which I, like one of the former speakers, have a strong fondness for, to other parts of the province.

I also speak as a former chair of the governing council of the University of Toronto, an institution which, as you know, was founded by some outstanding Scots, educators and community leaders who felt it was important to have an institute of higher learning in the new land. What they were able to initiate has become one of the premier institutions of this country. Indeed, the excellence of its students is recognized worldwide. I think that too is acknowledged in this bill, and I'm proud to do so.

As a person of Italian heritage, let me say, wearing my other hat for a moment, that we share a great deal in common with the Scots. There certainly has been a love affair between Italy and Scotland in literature and in history. I will remind you briefly of Sir Walter Scott and the wonderful things he had to say about Italy and the much time he spent there. We on the other hand in Italy, according to tradition, invented the bagpipes, probably something very few people know. It was the shepherds in the mountainous areas of Italy, the Apennines, which form the backbone of Italy, that used a miniature version of the bagpipe called the cornamusa to marshal the sheep. I guess it was around the time of the Romans that the instrument was exported to Scotland, and there of course it made a big hit. I don't think it has ever had quite the attachment for Italians that it has had for Scots.

We take no credit for haggis, and proudly so, but we do respect the tradition that goes with it.

I will say that the most recent exploits of the Scots are something that we should all be proud of, the recent experiments in cloning; the kinds of opportunities that

will provide are staggering. I only worry that we may have a situation where the Scots will take over the world and force the bagpipes and haggis on all of us through a cloning exercise, but I expect they would be judicious, as always, and that will not happen.

1040

We of Italian origin of course laid claim to Canada before the Scots did. June 24 of this year marks the 500th anniversary of the landing of the Matthew, skippered by Giovanni Caboto, a citizen of Venice. That is certainly the definitive date here in Canada for discovering Canada. I suspect he probably had a Scot or two on board, but I'll leave that to other members to discover.

This issue has been outstanding for some time, and I think it is time we deal with it. In fact, it was a previous Liberal government that dealt with it the last time, back in 1988, and the decision was to just do nothing. We are one of three provinces, as has been pointed out, that does not have an official tartan. That seems strangely curious, because if you look at the tartan we have — I have here something from the protocol handbook that has been prepared by the government of Canada, which says quite clearly that the tartan has been in use for over 100 years, although not officially, and it is based on our coat of arms. The yellow is for the three maple leaves which appear on the green background of the coat of arms; the red is for the cross of St George; the black is for the bear which appears at the top of the shield; and the brown is the colour combination created by the moose on the left and the deer on the right of the shield.

That seems to me fairly self-evident. We have a tartan that represents our shield. We have a tradition in this country of tartans, and it would seem to me a moot point that after so long we simply make it official.

There's only one thing I would say to the member, that if this Legislature does pass Bill 132, and I certainly hope that will be the result, we then take the next step. Simply passing it in this Legislature does not make it official. It has to be recognized by Scotland, by the King's Lyon college, I believe, which is equivalent to giving an imprimatur to the coat of arms and therefore making it truly official.

I'm happy to support this bill and I commend the member for bringing it to our attention.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph) : I am proud to rise this morning and join the debate on private member's Bill 132, An Act to adopt an official tartan for Ontario, and to commend my colleague Mrs Ross, the member for Hamilton West, for bringing this tribute to Ontario's Scottish heritage forward.

As a Canadian of Scottish, Irish and English ancestry, the tradition of this tartan is one that reminds me of personal, of community and of national history and identity, some of which I would be happy to share with my colleagues this morning.

For instance, the Elliots: The Elliots are a border clan and take their name from the village of Elliott in the shire of Forfar. Some Elliots have had interesting stories. For instance, one branch of the Elliott family, the Elliots of Stobs, originated in the 16th century, and in 1666 one Gilbert Elliott of Stobs was created a baronet of Nova Scotia by King Charles II. In 1718, George Elliott, a son

of the third baronet, became governor of Gibraltar, and according to the history books, in 1779 Governor Elliott defended the Rock against more than 100,000 attackers over a period of nine weeks and was credited by historians with one of the greatest achievements in British military history.

In the 17th century Gilbert Elliott worked for religious freedom and for his efforts he was condemned for high treason in 1685. Fortunately he was pardoned and then, interestingly enough, was made a lord after that. Does this matter to Ontario at all? In fact, the interesting thing is that his pioneering work was instrumental in the later movements for religious freedom in England. It greatly influenced the thinking of one John Graves Simcoe who, when he became our Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, would be the man to outlaw slavery and give equal land and settlement rights to the clergy for both the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches.

Today I wear not the Elliott tartan but the official city of Guelph tartan. This actually resembles quite closely the proposed Ontario tartan. Many of the colours are similar: red, green, blue. We have gold instead of white and we have more black. The colours in the city of Guelph tartan actually appear in our city official arms and crests. In fact, the design and the thread count for the city of Guelph tartan came from the MacRae hunting tartan. Of course, most of us will know that Colonel John McCrae, who is honoured through this tartan, was a soldier, a poet, a physician, a native son of Guelph, and of course, famous for having written *In Flanders Fields*, the poem that we all know and particularly remember at Remembrance Day.

MacRae was a Scottish family from which many famous clergymen are also descended. Duncan MacRae, living in the 16th century, compiled many Gaelic poems and so contributed to the development of Scottish studies. I am delighted that this tradition is continued today in the city of Guelph through the Scottish studies program at the University of Guelph. Mrs Ross recognized Mr Jim Macneil in the audience today, who was instrumental in helping develop the tartan plan. In that regard, this will be unique among Canadian tartans.

Guelph's agricultural college, for which we are famous throughout the world, was also founded by a Scot, Mr Fergus. Of course, the town of Fergus is named after him and is now home of the famous Fergus Highland Games.

Scots were academic leaders in Britain and continued to be so when they came to Canada. The University of Toronto started out as King's College, also founded by Scots.

The city of Guelph is very proud of having been founded by Scots settlers. We have in our city a very famous landmark called the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception or, fondly, the Church of our Lady. It is our city landmark and is an outstanding example of church architecture. What most Guelphites do not know is that this cathedral stands on land that was donated free by a Scots Presbyterian to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Guelph, also a Scot. This is an example of the inclusiveness and tolerance of Scottish culture, a heritage that all Canadians are proud to call their own. It is one that is reflected in our modern, multicultural society, where our

religious and cultural differences are shared, understood and celebrated.

The Scots are heirs to the Celtic tradition, a tradition that at one time in history actually covered more than half of Europe. Celtic studies, such as at the University of Toronto, are reviving now the ancient wisdom of Celts and their mystical approach to life and nature. We all are familiar with the rise and interest in Celtic music; we're even noticing it in our films today.

This Celtic tradition is in fact the origin of the district tartan and reflects the geographical area and its natural beauty. Of course, the proposed Ontario tartan also reflects Ontario's geography as well as its history and the representation of our first nations people and of our first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald.

In my view, the Ontario tartan will serve to remind all Ontarians of the beauty that is Ontario and of our common responsibility to protect it for the benefit of future generations. I am very proud to support this private member's bill, and I do so because I believe it will enhance our multicultural society by encouraging us to appreciate our heritage.

At citizenship court in Guelph two weeks ago, I had the pleasure of welcoming 75 people to Guelph from 27 different countries.

When we share our cultural differences we are united. Our communities are grounded on this principle. The tartan is an example and a celebration of cultural uniqueness. It recognizes the contributions of the Scots who have worn it in the past and will benefit all of us to choose to proudly wear it in the future.

1050

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I am pleased to have the opportunity today to participate in this debate and inform the member I'm proud to support the bill. As an Ontarian who was born and raised in Sarnia — my family apparently came to Canada around 1840 somewhere. We're mongrels. As much as we can figure, we're Scots who arrived here by way of northern Ireland.

My earliest memory — I guess it's not a memory. I was baptized by Dr MacGillivray in St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in downtown Sarnia. Dr MacGillivray, who was quite famous throughout Presbyterian life at the time, was once a moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Right beside St Andrew's there was a small stone building that was built by Alexander Mackenzie, who we would all know was the second Prime Minister of Canada. I can remember quite clearly my memories of this relatively small stone building he had built. Actually going to Lakeview Cemetery in Sarnia, where he lies today is one of the little landmarks up in the northwest corner. As someone who, as I said, is a mongrel, I'm pleased to be married to a Ferguson, whose lines are much more clear.

One of the things we don't really understand is that Scots came to Canada through a long period of time. There's no one point of which you could say, "This was the Scottish immigration." They came over a long period of time and were a significant part of the Ontario political and business scene, out of all proportion to their numbers. They were the leaders of commerce. By 1870, although

they represented only about 16% of the province, they represented, either direct Scottish immigration or sons — and daughters, I suspect — of Scottish people, half of the entrepreneurial business class of Canada.

To be a little provocative today, I might quote — and this is provocative I think in the Scottish community — this book by John Kenneth Galbraith, something you might not expect from John Kenneth Galbraith, a book called *The Scotch*. I just want to read a little bit of it. It says:

"When the Scotch settled by the lake in the early 19th century in what was then called Upper Canada, they found the political life of the colony a comfortable monopoly of the privileged. At the apex was the Lieutenant Governor, an appointee of the crown, and almost invariably a retired general (or sometimes lesser officer) of Wellington's armies. Surrounding him and advising him were Anglican bishops, businessmen and minor members of the aristocracy who had 'come out' from England to make good and were starting in at the top. There have been, one imagines, more wicked oligarchies than the Family Compact as it was called. But, undeniably, it ruled in its own behalf. Its members took all the posts of privilege and profit under the crown. Trade favoured its merchants. Most important, land grants went to its members, or to the Church as the real estate holding company for the Compact, or to those who were in a position to pay the people who granted the land. One of the rewards of an utterly secure social position has always been the ability to take bribes from lesser folk without loss of dignity or sense of demeanment. The Scotch ranged themselves in political opposition to the Family Compact. Those by the lake needed very little education on the subject for they had been forced to obtain the land from one of its more prominent members, the eccentric, profane and bibulous Colonel Talbot."

The history of Scots in Ontario was one that gave rise to the birth of the Liberal Party of Ontario. The Liberal Party of Ontario came from a Scottish heritage. Those are the Liberals of Ontario's roots. As a matter of fact, the first five Premiers of this province were Liberals and three of those were Scots, one named Ross, by the way.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This is a bill which is long overdue, an official Ontario tartan which recognizes the great contribution of our province's Scottish heritage.

Having the honour to represent Cambridge, our community's foundation was established by Scottish immigrants from Dumfries settling in Shades Mill, which subsequently became Galt and later, along with Preston and Hespeler, Cambridge. The descendants of the Scottish immigrants of the early 19th century remain an important part of our rapidly expanding community. Cambridge's founding father, William Dickson, made a wise choice in the location of Shades Mill on the heritage Grand River.

We celebrate our community's Scottish heritage by the annual Cambridge Highland Games, held this year on Saturday, July 19. It is renowned as the most prestigious highland games in North America.

Cambridge is also the home of the Highland Fusiliers, formerly the Highland Light Infantry. Our regiment defended our country in two world wars and Korea and proudly wears the Mackenzie tartan.

I compliment the member for Hamilton West, a member of the Ross clan, named for the first Earl of Ross, established in 1226. I commend Mrs Ross for her choice of a modified Macdonald tartan, honouring Ontario's first Premier.

Tartans date from the third century AD, the clan tartans from the 17th century. The author Martin Martin wrote in 1703: "Each isle differs from each other in their fancy of making plaids, as to the stripes and breadth and colours. This humour is as different through the mainland of the Highlands in so far that they who have seen those places, are able, at the first view of a man's plaid, to guess the place of his residence."

There are several definitions of clans. Some refer only to Highland tribes. Others regard it as a synonym for family, or in fact any group of people acting with a common interest. The latter certainly describes Ontario and its citizens.

I am honoured to support Ontario's first official tartan.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton West, you have two minutes.

Mrs Ross: It's interesting. When you bring forward a bill you're never quite sure where the debate's going to take you, and the direction we end up in always amazes me.

I want to thank the member for Kingston and The Islands, who was right: Mitch Hepburn did say, "This is the first time in my life that I've spoken from a Tory platform," when he was referring to the load of manure he was standing on. But the response at the time was, "Throw 'er into high gear, Mitch, she's never had a bigger load on."

I want to thank the member for London Centre very much. She spoke very well to the unique characteristics of the Scots and the fact that they are truly possessive and very jealous of some of their — haggis is one, for example, and the bagpipes. When my husband and I are anywhere near bagpipes, you can bet your bottom dollar we're going to be there till they're finished playing, because there's nothing like the sound of bagpipes to a Scot.

The member for Simcoe East mentioned quite rightly that the member for Grey-Owen Sound brought forward April 6 as Tartan Day. I commend him for doing that and I know he would have wanted to be here today.

The member for Downsview mentioned a different tartan that has been around but has never really been accepted by the police or the fire services, those people who notably wear tartans. This is in fact the official tartan.

The member for Guelph, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and the member for Cambridge, I thank you very much for your comments.

This is a true Celtic symbol, and I think we should all be very proud to wear this tartan. I hope we'll have quick passage through third reading.

1100

RURAL POLICE SERVICE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I move private member's notice of motion number 56:

That in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requests the Solicitor General consult with municipal and police stakeholders to develop standards to ensure that residents of rural areas of the province of Ontario receive adequate and effective police service to protect their communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Pursuant to standing order 96(c)(i), the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Hardeman: I'm pleased to put forward this motion today, as setting the standards will go a long way to allay the concerns of my residents in Oxford county as they relate to the changes being made in law enforcement.

I personally have some mixed feelings in putting forward this resolution. I've been a strong proponent for many years of local autonomy, that decisions that affect the local basic services should be the responsibility of local government, but at the same time, I think people across the entire province are entitled to adequate and effective policing. Crime doesn't stop at municipal borders, nor should the protection from or the stopping of that crime and the apprehension of the criminals be different in different areas of the province.

As former Solicitor General Allan Pilkey said on April 22, 1992, "It's a basic right of people in this province of ours to be guaranteed public safety." He went on to say, "It is the responsibility of this government to ensure that this very right is in fact protected."

Our government has been doing that over the past couple of years. The Solicitor General has made a number of changes in police services, including the governance, the provision of services and the funding of those services. The governance and funding issues have been debated for many years, with no resolution. Through the Who Does What exercises we were able to realign the services and provide the ability for municipalities to become completely responsible for the provision of municipal policing, or in fact all policing.

Through Bill 105 the province has changed the makeup of police services boards, putting them under municipal jurisdiction. The policing has already been provided by our urban municipalities; the changes made in Bill 105 relate more to their control over the money they've been spending in the past. But the other major change is to rural policing in Ontario, which has in the past been provided by the OPP and put on the provincial tax rolls, provided by the income tax of the province. Bill 105 deals with these inequities.

It also allows the municipalities to provide police services in the most appropriate manner for their purposes. Rural municipalities which have been getting OPP protection will have the option of contracting with the Ontario Provincial Police, with other municipal police forces in their area, or they can set up their own police force or jointly with other municipalities. This is where I see the need for provincial standards.

As the municipalities put out for pricing for the OPP protection they wish to contract for, the OPP will put forward a price based on the present expenditure and the present level of service the OPP has been providing. That will be deemed to be the appropriate level of service, which in the past has been set by the province.

When the municipalities receive such a quote, they may deem it inappropriate or, the price being too high, under the bill they may look at other options — to contract out to other municipalities or to set up their own police force — but they will have no standard on which to base their decision. If another police force puts forward a tender, there will be no way to measure the adequacy of policing as it relates to the two contracts, so I feel they will be making a decision based strictly on price, not on the adequacy of service. Bill 105 includes a provision for all municipalities to provide “adequate” policing, but there is no definition of what would be considered adequate.

It may be quite easy to suggest that the adequacy is what they are presently getting, but I think there would be many definitions of what would be considered adequate in different municipalities.

I’ve received a number of items of correspondence from constituents in my riding who believe that the present OPP protection is not adequate. This discussion or this complaint has not just started recently; it has been going on for some time. As I was putting forward this resolution, I went through a number of Hansards, and there have been a number of discussions over the years. Particularly in 1992, I read from the former Solicitor General’s comments as to the government being criticized for not providing adequate OPP protection, yet the law was that that is what we were doing.

I think it’s very difficult to define adequacy, and I believe with this resolution we will provide the opportunity to actually define the level of service and the type of service that must be provided across the province.

I also think it’s very important in the resolution that it is not done through the mandate of the provincial government, that they just force these standards upon municipalities. I think it’s very important that the ministry consult with municipalities, with the police stakeholders and with the public as to what would be deemed to be adequate.

I would point out that I have a letter that was sent to me a number of months ago. It was drafted by a local committee on community policing, and it was sent to point out what they deemed to be the inadequacy of policing as it presently stands and their wish that the government would do something about that. I would just like to highlight a few of the items that are in this letter.

The first item is: “I would like to remind you that one election promise of Premier Harris was preservation of law and order.... The most important issue and the one which needs immediate attention is the preservation of law and order, to re-establish civility in our lives. Those living in rural areas are seeing less and less patrol cars and police officers. It is time for local and rural community policing” to be established.

It’s a rather long letter. They go on and talk about the individual items we should be doing. They list some 17 different items. I don’t propose to go through them all, but I think there are one or two that are rather important as they relate to this issue.

Two I would point out are: “Victims of break-ins and vandalism are repeatedly victimized, through lack of local patrols.... Most parents and the majority of the general public need to have restored to their lives a feeling of

control, security and civility. They need to be listened to, heard and responded to by governments of all levels. The time has come to stop relying on the opinions of the so-called experts.”

I would just like to read the last paragraph at the bottom of the letter. It says: “I await hearing about the discussions on these concerns listed and am hopeful that all members of Parliament will see the need for change has come. There are many frustrated victims of crime who out of frustration don’t come forward to the police to submit a report due to the feeling nothing will be done about it. Criminals and the general public need to see the police in action, to feel that there is action and that something will be done.”

I think it’s rather important as I read this letter — it is signed by a concerned citizen who also happens to be a municipal mayor. I think they too realize that the issue of protection and law enforcement is a very important issue and they think the government should move forward on that.

As I said when I started my presentation, I think it’s very important that the Solicitor General look at the setting of provincial standards, as we look at all the other good changes he’s making in this area, to make sure that the level of policing will be available to all citizens of the province, that it will not be restricted to certain areas.

Finally, I want to point out that this resolution in no way implies that the present level of municipal policing, which of course is 80% of the policing in the province, is of a substandard nature. This is being put forward strictly to make sure that as we go to municipal policing in all of rural and northern Ontario, the citizens of the province may count on the type of policing they’ve come to expect, or had hoped would be improved upon and not be reduced to the level some members of our municipal community may want to go to.

With that, I look forward to the support of all the members of the Legislature to put this forward to the ministry.

1110

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I find this resolution absolutely extraordinary. Here we have a parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Municipal Affairs asking this House to support a resolution that requests that the Solicitor General deal with municipal and police stakeholders to develop an overall policy.

It is unbelievable, first of all, that he would bring it here because surely to goodness this is what the Solicitor General, who’s involved with policing in this province, should be doing right from the very beginning. What the heck is going on here? We have a member of the government in effect admitting that obviously those consultations aren’t taking place right now or they’re not taking place in an adequate manner. This is precisely what’s going to happen, not only in the policing area but in many other areas as a result of the downloading this government has done to the municipal tax base.

Let’s just remind the people of Ontario that as a result, and as part of the downloading package, \$180 million that used to be paid by the province for community policing will now be paid by the local taxpayers. You can’t have it both ways. You cannot expect the province

to have control over all policing standards and at the same time have the cost of all policing now being paid for by the local taxpayers, particularly in those small rural municipalities that don't have the kind of tax base that can afford this kind of thing. They are now going to get a tax bill on an annual basis for the first time ever, starting January 1, 1998, demanding they pay X number of dollars for the kind of policing, OPP policing, that presumably they're going to get. Nobody seems to know how they're going to adjudicate as to who pays what in these rural areas. It's left up in the air and a lot of the local councils are extremely concerned about it.

I will not be supporting this resolution because I assume this kind of negotiation and consultation is already taking place between the Solicitor General and the policing authorities and the municipal stakeholders in this province. If it isn't, then I say to this government, get on with the job.

The provincial government ultimately is responsible for the good maintenance of law and order in this province. Let's not forget that although all governments over the last 20 or 30 years have talked about all these wonderful partnerships they have with local municipalities, municipalities legally and from a practical viewpoint are still creatures of the province. In other words, it's up to the province to determine what kind of services and level of services can be delivered at the local level.

I'm simply saying to you, Parliamentary Assistant, that I hope the impact of this resolution is already happening on an ongoing basis because the residents of Ontario are ill-served if it's not already happening.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I'm going to think about this in the next half-hour to determine whether I'm going to support the resolution because I'm so puzzled by it, quite frankly.

I agree in one sense with the member for Oxford, though. I don't trust his government either. I agree with you that with what's going on there may have to be standards for policing in rural communities. It may come to that. It's strange we've never had to do so up until now and you have to wonder what's triggering this concern among the government members, since it was never necessary before. To that extent, I agree with the member for Kingston and The Islands that there's something strange happening here. Does the member for Oxford fear that the Solicitor General and the Minister of Finance are not going to provide the level of funding to municipalities that will allow them to provide an adequate level of police services?

It's my understanding that there are some inconsistencies out there now in policing, with the OPP providing it, in some cases at no charge, in other cases with a charge and so forth. I understand the inconsistency of what's out there in the province now. I can remember struggling with that issue when we were in government as well, so I do understand the problem.

But I don't think most people feel that the level of policing is substandard at this point. Nobody ever has enough cruisers on the streets, or the police on the street that they'd like to see, but at the same time we'll never get to that degree because of the cost of doing so.

The member says that a municipality, if it's now receiving services by the OPP — I don't want to misquote him; I think this is what he's saying — can either pay for that service or make an arrangement to have their own police service or contract with another municipality, presumably a neighbouring municipality.

It's my understanding the Solicitor General's not allowing that. My information is that if a municipality tries to make an arrangement with a nearby municipality, an adjacent municipality, they're being told no, and I don't understand that. If I'm wrong I stand to be corrected, but that was what I and some others of my colleagues were led to believe, that this wasn't being allowed. I don't understand that at all. Perhaps the member for Oxford, if he has time in his wrapup, could shed some light on that because I'm concerned about it.

If you simply say that there must be a certain standard of police services, but you engage in downloading to the extent that municipalities have enormous difficulty — there are lots of municipalities with very low levels of assessment — if a municipality cannot provide the standard you think is appropriate and which may be appropriate, I might add, but they can't afford to do it without enormous tax increases at the local level, what moral authority do you have to set a standard? About the same level of moral authority the federal Liberal government has to impose health care standards on provinces if it's not providing the funding to do so.

That's what is bothering me about what your resolution is trying to do. I think it's a well-motivated resolution, I'm not questioning that, and I applaud the member for Oxford for bringing it forward, but I'm concerned about what this could lead to. It could lead to you people saying, the Harris government saying: "We're going to stick it to you in the form of downloading, but you've got to have standards that we will set. You'll have no say in those standards and you'll have no say in any money that comes from the province either, because it won't be coming at all."

You cannot have it both ways. You can't download to the degree you are and then think you have any moral authority to set standards at the municipal level. That's not appropriate. It's not fair to the municipalities and I don't think you can get away with that; I don't think you should get away with that.

I want to leave some time for my colleagues to speak on this. As I said at the beginning, I want to listen to this debate for a while and see whether I personally — not that that will cause you a great deal of angst, I know — will support this resolution.

1120

Mr Bob Wood (London South): It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Ministry of the Solicitor General to indicate our support for this resolution and to recommend it to the House. I don't want to repeat the excellent arguments made in favour of this resolution by the member for Oxford, but I do want to draw to the attention of the House that there's a reasonable consensus from many sources throughout the province that we should move in the direction he recommends, and I might indicate that the ministry is indeed moving in that direction.

NDP Solicitor General David Christopherson, Ottawa Citizen, December 1993:

"It is our intention to implement equitable police financing, which means all Ontarians...pay their fair share of policing, and right now, we don't have that.... We'd like to obviously do it as quickly as possible, because we'd like to institute fairness [and] clearly the province needs the revenue."

The 1994 Provincial Auditor's report recommendations:

"The Ministry," of the Solicitor General, "in conjunction with the OPP, should:

"More actively pursue eliminating inequities in the financing of municipal police services;

"Collect all payments due but still in arrears; and

"Ensure that all municipalities are consistently charged on the basis of full cost recovery."

The NDP government's response to 1994 auditor's report:

"The ministry is committed to the principle that everyone should pay their fair share of policing costs."

"The ministry has also identified the need to address the issue of municipal contracts being in arrears more effectively."

"Older municipal contracts that are not at full cost recovery will be addressed either in the context of equitable financing or a renegotiation."

A London Free Press editorial, November 14, 1996:

"The unfairness of small and rural communities getting policing at 100% provincial cost, through the OPP, has long been a bone of contention in Ontario. The [Crombie] panel recommends that smaller communities start paying municipal money towards policing, just as their larger counterparts do. That's only fair."

We've heard a couple of comments about standards. The Who Does What changes are of course a wash overall and a fund is available to help municipalities that have problems. I would like to make it quite clear to the House that it is our intention to ensure there is adequate policing throughout the province. That is the responsibility of the province and we are going to make sure that happens.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm going to echo many of the sentiments that my colleague from Kingston and The Islands gave just a few minutes past. It is a very curious resolution that causes me some grave concern. I, like my colleague from Kingston and The Islands, would have expected that with the downloading of the full cost of police services to our rural municipalities — I live in a rural municipality and was the clerk-treasurer of that municipality for 10 years. I'm very concerned about this downloading to the rural municipalities and the ability of the OPP to provide pertinent and appropriate policing with the revenues they're going to generate from this per household levy to our rural municipalities.

In northern Ontario, where we look towards the OPP to basically provide all our police service, when major incidents happen, with the highly technical detective work and the search teams, for instance, there's a lot of money there that I believe should be borne by the province as a whole and not just by our particular area.

For instance, we'll have many hunters and anglers come up from southern Ontario or from the United States.

Incidents occur and major search-and-rescue operations have to be initiated. Is it fair that our small group of townships that are served by the Haileybury detachment of the OPP have to finance all that? There's a very big concern there about what the per capita or per household charge is going to be to our homes and to our farms. That's another point I want to make in a minute, about the other downloading of the farm tax rebate that I think is going to complicate this.

It's very important that our municipal officials not only be consulted, but that through Bill 105, which dictates this downloading of costs to our rural municipalities, they are on a police services board and that there be adequate representation from our municipalities, as people have had in towns that have provided their own police services in the past. It's important that there be representatives from all the rural municipalities on police services boards so that not only is there an initial consultation with municipal and police stakeholders to develop the standards, but there's ongoing monitoring of how the police are servicing our rural communities.

What really concerns me is that we do not, in the government's zeal to cut costs, underfinance our police services in Ontario. This is a concern of every citizen of this province, that our police and justice system have the resources required and necessary to do the job. Rural Ontario, while we all still love to view it with the pastoral images of the past, unfortunately has probably moved into the 21st century with everyone else in this province, and our crime rate is growing in rural Ontario as it is everywhere else. That's sad, because most of us used to keep our houses unlocked until a few years ago. Many of us no longer do that.

We have high crime rates also in rural Ontario, and there's no reason to try to hide that fact or pretend it isn't so. So our policing services are even more important today than they have ever been in rural Ontario. We need to make sure that the resources are adequate and that the policing standards are adequate for our area. It's very important that there be that partnership with our rural municipalities in some formalized way so that our local detachments know there's a body to be working with, like a police services board, and that on a monthly basis there can be a formalized way of communicating what the needs are for our communities. That's very important.

It's interesting that this particular downloading of police costs happens to our rural municipalities at the very same time as another substantive download to our rural municipalities, and that is that now municipalities are going to have to pay for the provincial government's share of the farm tax rebate. That means that many rural municipalities that substantively rely on the farm and farm land assessment for their revenues are now seeing a shortfall of 75% of those revenues. Of course, what the municipal councillors are going to have to do to make them up is raise the mill rate across the board on all classes of property. Therefore, the farmers' residences and all the other homes in the rural communities are going to have to pay much more local tax to make up for the 75% cut that has been given to the municipalities from the provincial government.

Rural households and families are going to be hit with two big double whammies at the same time — actually three: The downloading of the farm tax rebate is going to substantially raise taxes on their home; the new per capita cost to provide policing in their community is going to be coming to hit; and then of course with all the new downloading responsibilities of these municipalities now, still paying for the health unit, the ambulance service and others, there are three major areas of cost that are going to have to be covered now by our rural homeowners.

We're going to see, starting next year and the year after, a tremendous increase in property taxation, especially in rural townships. So I certainly understand why the member, being from the government side, is probably pretty concerned about this, because the municipal officials, all the reeves and councillors and township administrators out there, are going to be very upset with the bills coming in if they don't have a say in how the police enforce the law in their community. It's going to be very, very important.

I'd say to the member that while I agree with the member for Kingston and The Islands that really this shouldn't be necessary, I can understand why you're concerned about this. I'd be concerned too, if I was on the government side, that we're downloading all this cost but I don't see a mechanism to make sure our community leaders are assured that the OPP are going to give adequate service or that they have the resources to give adequate service. That's going to be a big problem. You've identified a problem here, and I hope your resolution goes a bit of the way to try to solve it.

1130

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): In the few minutes I have to make comment, first of all, I received a letter from the member for Oxford asking for support of this resolution, and I'm curious as to why I should be supporting this resolution when you're talking about standardizing police services throughout the province.

In the area that I come from in northern Ontario there was an agreement, an understanding that was made by the former Conservative government back in the 1970s, that if the municipalities wanted to eliminate their municipal police forces, which happened in Cochrane, Smooth Rock Falls, Hearst and then a few years ago at Kapuskasing, they would be supplied with OPP services.

Now they're in the process of looking at the downloading that is happening, not only are they going to be charged for the cost of policing but all the other services that the Who Does What panel is dumping on to municipalities, and they're concerned about how much they're going to have to increase their property taxes so that the Conservative government can give their 30% tax break. Reduce the cost of the provincial government under the Conservatives and the property taxes are going to have to go up to pay for that. Everybody understands exactly what is happening.

As far as standardizing is concerned, I'm sure that there are a lot of communities — the municipal leaders or the unorganized areas — that don't want necessarily the same type of policing that might happen in a community of 15,000 or 20,000 people. They have a popula-

tion of 1,000 or 2,000, and if they see a cruiser around once in a while, they're happy with that type of service.

On the other hand, from what I can understand, the town of Hearst even by setting its own standards is going to have pay around \$220 per household, starting on January 1. In other communities it's \$200; in some it's \$250. If the Solicitor General through this private member's resolution is saying that he's going to set the standards for all of the communities whether they be rural, unorganized or whatever in northern Ontario or rural southern Ontario, he's going to be also saying how much the municipalities are going to have to raise taxes or a head tax on the unorganized areas that have been receiving OPP services for the last number of years.

The way I look at the resolution, when you're setting standards and saying you want an adequate and effective policing in rural and northern Ontario, the local people should have a say on what services they're delivering and what they have been satisfied with over the last 20 years. As I say, a lot of them abandoned and got rid of their municipal police forces with the understanding that that would never come back again.

I understand that some municipalities that are close to larger municipalities that have their own municipal police force are being discouraged from working out agreements with those municipalities. They're saying, "No, you should be going to the OPP and buying these services rather than working out a cheaper deal with the larger municipalities."

Some municipal leaders are saying to me, "What does this mean with Bill 108 as far as sharing the costs of revenue coming in from court cases, fines and whatever are concerned? Is that going to mean that some municipalities are going to have to have a quota system, get out there and whip their OPP officers or their police force to say, 'We need more revenue. Bring in more revenue because that way we don't have to raise the taxes as much'?" With the Solicitor General — if this resolution was to pass — setting the standards, he would be the one that would be forcing the municipalities to increase their property taxes and in turn just give the money away that's coming in as a 30% tax break to the wealthiest people.

While we're looking at private members' resolutions I'm a little bit wary: Is this actually a private member's resolution that is here, or is it a Mike Harris resolution that is to rake in extra revenue and force up property taxes so that we can give a bigger tax break to the wealthy people? I'm very uneasy as to who is writing that resolution. We see that the rules of the House are being changed and we see a private member saying, "I wrote up those rules," yet we find out now that it was coming directly from the government House leader and the Premier.

With that, I still haven't made up my mind whether I'm going to support this resolution. It's highly unlikely, but I will leave some time for my other colleague who wants to speak on this.

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak briefly this morning on this issue as well and, as could be expected, to support

my colleague from Oxford in his effort to seek approval of this particular resolution.

I always find it remarkable the extent to which the member from Kingston and The Islands goes to enforce his commitment to the status quo and his reluctance to change. I guess from an NDP perspective there's a viewpoint of apprehension this morning, but I know, with the former Solicitor General here today, that there was, in my mind at least, an indication, and I don't wish to imply motive or put words in his mouth, but I think there was a genuine understanding that there had to be a need to address how police financing was arrived at in this province, and one that needs to be addressed as we move into the future.

It certainly is an important and critical issue to rural residents, particularly residents in rural and northern Ontario, given the issues that will stem from the discussions surrounding the Who Does What debate and certainly the intentions to move to a municipally funded police system. I think it's critically important as well, not only to those who are delivering the services but to those people who are involved in the administration of those services, to find and have the opportunity to speak their mind in terms of what issues of concern are presenting themselves to them.

As well, I think it's critically important to the public at large because they are the ones — and I think this is an issue that certainly extends beyond this government's assuming office, in terms of my experience as someone who has grown up in a rural area, someone who is familiar with the challenges confronting rural policing. That issue is at the forefront in the minds of many rural residents in terms of where we go and the expectation and delivery of service we can anticipate in the future.

It is appropriate to reflect upon Sir Robert Peel, who was the founder of the first modern police force in London, England, in 1829. He left us with the following thought: "The police are the public and the public are the police." I think that provides a very sound framework from which we can move forward to discuss this issue as it applies to establishing a municipally funded police system. As well, it provides us a framework that addresses the type of changed environment we are in. This whole issue, in my mind, this resolution being advanced by my friend and colleague from Oxford is certainly an important first step to addressing a number of issues applicable to policing in general.

This first step must, in my mind, be accompanied by issues such as structure and organization, police function, governance and the ability to measure the adequacy of police services in this province. I think it's important to remember as well that about 83% of Ontario's population are policed by municipal or regional forces, about 2% of our population are currently served under contract with the Ontario Provincial Police force and about 15%, or about 576 municipalities in this province, are provided with police services at no cost to the municipality.

This is really the group or sector that the member's resolution is being sensitive to. I think it's important that we look at that, but not necessarily in isolation of policing issues in general. In fact, I am very confident that the Solicitor General himself has a sound understanding of

the changed environment that we're in, the expectations that we're having of municipal partners with respect to this particular issue.

I know and am certainly pleased about the time he has given to county officials from both Middlesex and Elgin counties, the opportunity for them to sit down with the Solicitor General and provide an overview of their thoughts, concerns and opportunities with respect to assuming and being involved in a municipally funded police system. That dialogue and consultation is very beneficial in terms of where we want to go and in ensuring that we have some positive conclusions around this issue.

As I mentioned earlier, as someone who has been raised in a rural community and represents a predominantly rural riding, this issue certainly is at the forefront for many constituents in Middlesex and in other rural areas. I think at times, as the member for Oxford has emphasized, there is a degree of uncertainty that presently exists with respect to the type of service people can expect.

There is a degree of apprehension to the extent that in many cases crimes are simply going unreported because there is concern that the nature of those crimes won't be investigated in a timely manner. There is a degree of discomfort there at present. It's something that certainly needs to be addressed and can be addressed in the context of revisiting how services are financed and the other functions that I alluded to earlier.

In January 1996 I had the opportunity to host a public forum in my own riding on issues surrounding rural policing matters. Some 300 people attended that particular meeting, and I think it was evident at that time that there was concern. There was certainly a desire to see new opportunities pursued with respect to how we're financing police services and where we want to go in the future.

1140

That meeting certainly provided a basis for me to gather a sound understanding of those concerns locally, and I have taken full opportunity of advancing those concerns to the Solicitor General. As I said, I am fully confident that the Solicitor General understands the nature and concerns of residents, as well as those individuals who are administering police services in the province.

As well, I've taken the opportunity to participate in a ride-along program with OPP officers. I think it's important to have an understanding of the very issues they are dealing with on a day-to-day basis: the distance, the challenges they face with respect to responding to incidents. That's provided me with a sound background in terms of some of the issues that need to be addressed as we move into this discussion.

As well, it's important to realize that the Solicitor General has moved to examine and review police services in Ontario. The discussion paper that was released in May of last year provides a strong framework from which we can work to address the issues that the member for Oxford has raised. Certainly I think this type of framework provides an action plan that facilitates dialogue. It facilitates meetings between county representatives, as I've alluded to. It provides a framework for local public meetings, and I think it certainly provides strength to the

resolution proposed by my friend and colleague from Oxford.

In conclusion, I would simply say that I'm obviously supportive of this resolution. It's very near and dear to the hearts of many of my constituents in Middlesex. I'm supportive of my colleague's goals to seek fair and proper provincial standards and an appropriate standard or level of protection so that all residents receive an adequate level of protection in the province. I think that's what, by and large, many residents are looking for. They want to understand the ground rules. They want to understand what they can expect from police services in this province.

In conclusion, I'd simply say that I think the resolution is indicative of the expectations of municipal leaders to provide that framework, to provide an element of fairness. It meets the expectations of law enforcement officials. But most importantly, the resolution goes a long way to providing adequate direction so that the residents, rural and northern residents and particularly residents in Middlesex county, have a clear understanding that the issues that are of concern to them are being appropriately addressed by the Solicitor General.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): An interesting resolution, to say the least. The member opposite is trying to bring in a resolution that would indeed put the province in a fairly interesting position. As has been mentioned before, simply put, the provincial government is cutting transfer dollars to municipal governments, which is going to affect policing.

I know in the city of Timmins the police services commission and the council have to deal with how you operate a municipal police force with fewer dollars. One of the things they're actually looking at is merging the Timmins city police in with the Ontario Provincial Police. At the same time, the Ontario Provincial Police have been having some difficult times over the last number of years. In fact, if you go to communities like, I would imagine, Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Matheson, many of the communities that are serviced by the Ontario Provincial Police, you've been seeing less and less of an OPP presence in those communities because of budget cuts and a whole bunch of other issues as far as how the OPP have been affected by what's been going on over the past number of years.

What the government member is asking here is that we put in place some sort of mechanism to make sure there are standards that are followed when it comes to community policing. I think specifically what he's getting at is that he's trying, in the case of rural Ontario, to make sure we have adequate policing. I'd say to the member across the way, one of the first things you've got to do if you want to make sure there's adequate policing is to support police budgets.

Let's cut to the chase here. The government has an agenda, and that agenda is to cut expenses in Ontario by some \$9 billion over the life of their government. You can't do that without affecting essential services. If you take a look at what's happened in fire services and you look at what's happening in police services, those particular services are being affected by the budget cuts. The member can't have it both ways. You can't on the one

hand stand on a ticket of the Common Sense Revolution and of Mike Harris and the Conservative government saying that you want to have all these cuts and in that same document say you're not going to affect essential services and on the other hand, once you're in government, ask for these kinds of resolutions, because it is by way of your cuts and by way of the policies of this government that community policing is being affected.

The only thing I'll say in conclusion — I've only got a couple of minutes and I just want to take the chance to make this point: Government has a role and a responsibility in the communities across Ontario, and one of the things this government doesn't seem to understand is how important a role government should play. They're trying to make people believe that government is a bad and an evil thing and that if we remove government entirely, we'll all be the better for it. Well, that's what government is all about. Government is about providing policing to our communities. It's about making sure we have fire services in case of fire emergencies, making sure our roads are properly maintained, and in some cases, where traffic warrants, increasing roads. It's about making sure we have health care, all those services the public depend on.

When you have a government such as this one that does not believe in government, campaigns against it and says to people, "Government is an evil, terrible thing, and we need to get out of the lives of people," this is the cost you pay once you start implementing that agenda. The services that are affected aren't some airy-fairy services that people never hear about and never think they're going to get affected by; they are services like the police.

It's about making our communities safe. If you don't have the dollars to support municipal police forces and the Ontario Provincial Police, and coupled with that you have economic terrorism going on in the province by some of your policies, you will start having people living in communities feeling less safe as time goes on. If on the one hand you don't have proper policies to support people economically and on the other hand you don't support the police adequately, the security in our communities is going to deteriorate.

I think this is a sign of things to come. The parliamentary assistant recognizes that the policies of his government are going to affect community safety and he's asking that some sort of standards be put in place so that when all of these cuts come to bear on municipalities, municipalities take on more and more of the responsibility of the provincial government. I say to the parliamentary assistant, you can't have it both ways. I haven't got a problem with your resolution and what you're trying to do, but I want you to understand that the reason you're having to bring this resolution forward, in my opinion, is the cuts that are happening with your government. You, sir, don't trust your own government. I think that says a lot about this government.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I'm pleased to stand today in support of this resolution by Mr Hardeman, my neighbour in the adjoining county of Oxford. I'm aware of some of the policing problems in Oxford and another neighbouring county, Elgin, as well as my area of Haldimand-Norfolk. I also represent the town of Tillsonburg, which is in Oxford county.

This resolution "requests the Solicitor General consult with municipal and police stakeholders to develop standards to ensure that residents of rural areas of the province of Ontario receive adequate and effective police service to protect their communities."

The choice of a structure of policing in a particular community is a local decision. It's made based on the public safety needs of the community being served. I feel this resolution is timely for those people in my area, the regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk. Right now this area is undergoing a review of police services in order to determine if services should be delivered region-wide by the Haldimand-Norfolk region or by the OPP. Currently urban areas are covered by the regional police, headquartered in Townsend. OPP services are provided for rural areas based out of two detachments in Cayuga and Simcoe.

While the debate is over service and which service will provide the lowest-cost policing, uppermost in people's minds is the quality of service, especially emergency services they may receive, to achieve the best protection. Indeed, emergency service, whether it's fire, ambulance or police, is on the minds of rural residents, as the perception of those in rural areas is that sometimes we feel we may not be receiving the same level of service that our city and urban counterparts may be benefiting from.

There are inequities in funding and service which currently exist across the province. There is an inherent unfairness in that many communities receive services through the provincially funded OPP while at the same time other communities are serviced through municipally operated services funded through property tax. It is of course reasonable that all municipalities pay for the cost of policing, and again, in their own community, through their municipal property taxes. At this time, 576 municipalities do not pay directly for their local policing, while their neighbours are paying their fair share.

1150

With respect to this resolution, I feel it goes hand in glove with the direction which has been taken by the Solicitor General and this government. On December 21, 1995, the Solicitor General announced a comprehensive review of police services which focused on how police services are structured, financed and governed.

What's to prevent reductions of police budgets and reducing police service delivery if municipalities are given control of the budget? First of all, local taxpayers decide; they inform their municipal council how much policing is enough. Second, the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services will ensure both adequate and effective police services are provided. The commission can determine budget disputes between police service boards and councils after a hearing.

In addition, the Solicitor General will develop regulations for adequacy standards. To ensure all Ontarians have adequate policing, five core functions have been identified: crime prevention, law enforcement, emergency response, assistance to victims and maintenance of public order.

This resolution, in my mind, clearly identifies the need for standards and regulation which this government will implement. It is our duty as legislators to provide regula-

tion for standard of service which can be applied province-wide. It's what our constituents expect of us. This resolution addresses that point accurately and I will say eloquently. I'm honoured to have my name stand in support of this resolution.

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): This resolution has already been termed curious and is one that we have a lot of concern about in terms of what Mike Harris is actually trying to do when we talk about the downloading on municipalities, and now we have a private member coming forth talking about standards. First of all, we find out there's going to be downloading, but now they're talking about standards that go along with the downloading to municipalities that's going to occur. It's something to be concerned about.

In rural northern Ontario we have many unorganized territories but we also have many communities that are unique in terms of their policing needs. One community will differ from another in very many ways. Some communities will have an influx of people from the north into their communities at various times. Other communities throughout the north will have an influx of tourists. At that point they of course need more policing, more services. Taking any kind of power away from those local police boards, the boards that see the uniqueness of their particular community, is a little bit disturbing and something I'm truly concerned about.

The member for Renfrew North asked the Solicitor General not too long ago about policing in areas such as provincial parks and who will pay the bill, who will pay for those policing needs and for any emergencies that might occur in those large areas of the province. He really didn't get a definite answer, but I think through this resolution we're beginning to see that this government is going to develop the standards but put the bill down to what Mike Harris always referred to as being only the one taxpayer, that of course being the taxpayer in the municipalities, who is going to be responsible through this resolution for coming up with the particular standards that are outlined here to ensure that residents receive adequate policing.

I go back to that user fee. Mike Harris at one time, in the Common Sense Revolution, said, "No new user fees." What we're seeing here is in essence a user fee coming through the back door and a very curious resolution as to where it is going, what it is going to do in terms of the needs of that local taxpayer.

Some of the other members have referred to it already as being a way that this government is going to finance that 30% income tax reduction. They can say at the end of it all, "We did what we were supposed to do; don't worry about your tax bill," which has been raised some percentage at the local level because you have to cover costs such as this that have been downloaded on the municipalities.

I go back to the original point in terms of the uniqueness of not only the unorganized territories throughout northern Ontario but the uniqueness of individual municipalities. I've given examples of those that face different circumstances at different times of the year, whether it be an influx of a large percentage population because of the tourist season, whether it be an influx at certain times of

the year because of transient traffic coming in from the north. They know their needs and they know what they are going to need in terms of services during those particular times of the year. I think it's the local police board that is going to have to determine the standards that are asked of them by the local population and asked of them for those very unique and special circumstances that they face throughout the entire year.

I'm going to have trouble supporting this resolution. I will not be supporting it for those very facts that I've stated.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Oxford, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Hardeman: Thank you to all the members who spoke to the motion. I appreciate those who spoke in support of the motion and recognize that the intent of the motion was to provide the consultative process with which the Solicitor General could approach the issue of providing adequate policing throughout the province.

It's very important to recognize, as the members across the aisle were suggesting, that the needs in northern Ontario as they relate to adequacy may be different than the needs in southwestern Ontario or in the urban centres. I appreciate their concern but I would point out that I think the process of consultation with the parties involved is the only way to reach those standards that the residents of the province have a right to expect.

I appreciate the comments from the last speaker as they relate to the government recognizing that there is only one taxpayer. The issue becomes more and more important that we provide the best possible service to that taxpayer that we can for the dollars that are available. I would point out that presently, as was mentioned by the member for Middlesex, 82% of provincial residents pay for policing out of their property tax and it was fair that the whole province does that.

I think this provides the opportunity, as we look at the realignment of all the provincial and municipal services, to come to an equitable delivery of those services, that we now look at the policing issues and put them in as part of that package. I think this is the appropriate time to come to that fairness that not only this government but previous governments have pointed out in this Legislature was needed.

I thank them for the suggestions and I look forward to their support to the resolution.

TARTAN ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LE TARTAN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We will deal first with ballot item number 81 standing in the name of Mrs Ross. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Mrs Ross has moved second reading of Bill 132. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 94(k), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): Mr Speaker, can I ask that it be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee?

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

RURAL POLICE SERVICE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): We'll now deal with ballot item number 82 standing in the name of Mr Hardeman. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot item, will they please rise.

Mr Hardeman has moved private member's notice of motion number 56. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1333.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH SECTOR TRAINING AND ADJUSTMENT PANEL

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I rise today to congratulate the Minister of Health on a partial return to sanity. In this respect, the minister four weeks ago took the only program there was to help displaced hospital workers — this minister at an earlier date claimed not even to know of a single nurse who had been laid off under his administration, but thousands have been — and cancelled it summarily. He left hundreds of people who had been given separation agreements from hospitals and so on in the lurch. He said at that time that something else would happen for them, that the hospitals could handle it.

As per many of the initiatives this government has tried in the field of health care, it simply didn't work. Just like the doctor deal, the minister has now had to reverse himself. The HSTAP program has at least partially been left to continue to make up for the mistake the minister has made. The minister has seen part of the error of his ways and has been willing to recant.

We congratulate him for reinstating at least part of the HSTAP program. While this will help 500 workers who were left high and dry by the minister's actions, it doesn't help hundreds more who had yet to apply for the program, and people in public health fields and other fields who have been subject to the downsizing initiated by this government.

The next time the minister puts his programs under examination, we would wish for him not to just shoot first and ask questions later, but to listen to the people, particularly the people in the health system, before he pulls out his gun.

DORIS SILK

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Some would see the community of Ontario as the sum total of all the year-end financial reports of corporations, organizations and businesses. Others, however, see it as much more than that. Ontario is a conglomerate of communities and neighbourhoods of people, wonderful neighbourhoods and wonderful people striving to be the best they can be.

In those communities from time to time, among the literally thousands who give leadership and volunteer their time and energy, we centre out a particularly outstanding person. In Sault Ste Marie next week — Tuesday, June 10, to be exact — my community will be honouring, with a special benefit dinner, the contribution of Doris Silk.

To quote from a letter from the Lung Association, for which Doris works:

"Doris Silk is the epitome of a volunteer. If it needs doing, she does it; if she thinks you might need her, she calls. Doris really cares for her community and has given countless hours of her time for many great causes.... Her care and concern for her community is admirable and she sets a wonderful example for others to follow."

The first time I met Doris was on the bus on People's Road. How prophetic that was and in keeping with the theme that knits her life together.

Today, with the thousands of people in Sault Ste Marie who have benefitted from the efforts of Doris Silk, I say, Doris, thank you very much.

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): On June 6, 1944, the greatest armada ever assembled sailed from Britain to France to begin the liberation of Europe from the Third Reich. More than 30,000 Canadian soldiers, sailors and airmen, including many fine young men from Ontario, were directly involved in the largest single invasion of the Second World War, D-Day. Too many never returned.

On Christmas Day 1941, Hong Kong fell to the imperial forces of Japan. Most of the brave young Canadians stationed there were captured and sent to concentration camps. These prisoners of war were subjected to the most horrific conditions, including slave labour, starvation and torture. Many perished. Those who survived will never forget the unspeakable acts of cruelty inflicted upon them.

This Sunday, June 8, 1997, many of the dwindling number of war veterans in my riding of Simcoe Centre will gather at the cenotaph in Barrie to mark the 53rd anniversary of D-Day. They will also honour the veterans of the fall of Hong Kong. I will join them and pause to reflect on their great sacrifice, a sacrifice that helped preserve the freedom and democracy we all enjoy today.

I ask all members to pause now in a moment of silence to remember and honour those brave souls who sacrificed so much and asked so little in return.

SENIORS' INFORMATION PACKAGE

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): My statement is addressed to the minister responsible for seniors' issues. I am holding up the seniors' information package which was provided by the former office for seniors' issues. The fact sheets included in this package proved an invaluable source of information and helped the seniors in our province keep up to date on the wide range of programs and services available to them.

This package was last updated in 1995. You have now been holding the position of responsibility for seniors for

the last nine months. Minister, I'm asking you to update this seniors' information package so that seniors can be helped to be well informed about the programs and services available to them.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): It's the least he can do.

Mr Sergio: Absolutely the least he can do.

Failing to do that, you are not being responsive to the needs of the growing older population and you're not ensuring that seniors' interests are well served. Seniors need and ask to be kept informed. Many are poor and don't know where to get help. Seniors want to be independent and not to have to rely on others for information on services.

Minister, the seniors of Ontario are your only interest group, your only constituent group. Do the right thing, update the package and provide the necessary information and the correct information for seniors to rely on.

1340

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Yesterday the Minister of the Environment announced what he called a "student-led air quality initiative" that will get students involved in monitoring air quality. Now let me be absolutely clear: I'm entirely in favour of environmental education and believe it should be an integral part of the education curriculum. What concerns me is that this minister is using students as a smokescreen for Mike Harris' cutting and slashing of the environmental protection Ontarians have come to expect.

The minister went on to say that he hoped this initiative would "help the public better understand air quality issues." Frankly, that's insulting. The public understands full well that every summer a cloud of brown smog will hang in the air over much of Ontario. They know this is bad for their family's health and they're very aware that your cuts to monitoring and enforcement staff in your ministry aren't going to help that one bit. We continue to wait for vehicle emissions testing, which I, Pollution Probe and others have been calling on for quite some time now.

Yes, let's get young people involved in environmental issues, but let's be equally sure that government holds up its end of the bargain and exercises its responsibility to protect Ontario families from deadly air pollution which, as the minister himself said, takes 1,800 lives annually in our province.

HUGH SIBBALD

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): A constituent in my riding of Durham-York has been elected president of Resorts Ontario, which represents 220 resorts in southern Ontario and the near north. Hugh Sibbald the 37-year-old vice-president of the Briars Resort in Jacksons Point, takes over for a two-year term at the helm of Resorts Ontario. He follows in the footsteps of his father, John Sibbald, who served in the post in 1966 and is the association's current honorary president.

Hugh Sibbald and the Orillia-based Resorts Ontario are dedicated to the tourism industry. Tourism is one of the

largest industries in Ontario. Tourism generates more than \$12 billion in revenue annually. Tourism attracts more than three million visitors. Tourism is also the largest employer of young people in this province.

Hugh Sibbald recognizes the numerous challenges he faces during his two years as president of Resorts Ontario. They include educating Americans about what Ontario has to offer and the exceptional value of their tourism dollar; bringing all the disparate groups associated with tourism together; and making the public aware of how important tourism is to the Ontario economy.

I want to congratulate Hugh Sibbald and Resorts Ontario. The tourism industry is made up of many pieces of an intricate puzzle. Each interlocks to create an attractive package to visitors.

POLLUTION CONTROL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): People in Ontario thought they had seen everything that could be done by this Minister of the Environment in his dismantling of the ministry over the past year. What a shock is the speech that the minister gave this morning at the Delta Chelsea hotel in Toronto. The great brainwave in 1997 in Ontario is that the minister is now considering implementing something called — and you won't believe this — an emission trading pilot project in Ontario.

What that means is that companies now will be given so many points to pollute. You get up to 100 points to pollute the environment. Once you've exceeded your 100 points of pollution, instead of getting fined or instead of the ministry cracking down, you can buy more points from a neighbouring company that, as a good corporate citizen, doesn't pollute. Therefore, you keep polluting and you simply trade points.

It's an American system that frankly has failed. It is a system that is in place because there's no enforcement, there are no standards. It's equivalent to saying that once you've used up your 15 demerit points for bad driving, all you do is buy five or 10 points from a friend of yours who is a good driver and then you keep driving recklessly, speeding, going through stoplights, through stop signs. It is the exact same thing this minister is proposing. It is totally outrageous. It is bizarre.

I am not sure where Mr Sterling's coming off on this. He is now going to have 60 days to react. I ask the Premier, I ask the Minister to reconsider this stupid, outrageous idea. You don't trade emission points; you go after polluters. You don't simply allow them to buy —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Statements. Member for Hamilton Centre.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Yesterday, the government's Health Services Restructuring Commission landed in the community of Hamilton-Wentworth and sent a shiver down the collective spine of everyone in the community as we face the possibility of losing one or two of our acute care hospitals.

With regard to this, I'd like to make three points today:

First, there's absolutely no need for this commission to roll into Hamilton and shut down a hospital. We have a

local plan, developed locally with the input of everyone in the medical community and in the social services community, that allows us to keep our acute care hospitals as well as meet the fiscal demands and pressures this government has forced upon them.

Second, the government continues to say: "It's the commission that's shutting down these hospitals, not us. It's the commission." The people in Hamilton-Wentworth know clearly this commission was created under Bill 26, the omnibus bill. That's the government's bill. They appointed these commissioners, they're accountable and the four local Tories in Hamilton-Wentworth, the four Tory MPPs, are accountable for the decisions of this commission just as much as that health minister and we're going to hold them accountable.

Third, I want to read into the record a quote from an interview with the Hamilton Spectator editorial board from Mark Rochon who is the executive director of the Health Services Restructuring Commission: "Hospital restructuring without reinvestment will be in significant difficulty. Without reinvestment you don't have restructuring — you've just flattened the system."

MINE RESCUE COMPETITION

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Last Saturday I had the privilege of attending the annual provincial mine rescue competition held this time in Windsor, Ontario, and of hosting the mine rescue competition awards banquet on behalf of the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer.

This was a two-day event where 26 mine rescue teams and 28 equipment technicians made up from Ontario's 1,000 mine rescue volunteers participated. The competition involved real-life scenarios including smoke-filled rooms, simulated injuries and an eight-foot wall of fire.

The day was intense and showed just how vital the training and emergency preparedness are in dealing with mine disasters. We all owe a debt of gratitude to these miners who volunteer and put their own lives on the line to save mine workers and to ensure the continued safe operation of mines in Ontario.

Today I would like to recognize the special efforts of the provincial champions from Onaping Falconbridge Inc — Fraser Strathcona. Team members were the affable team captain Val Buttazzoni, Brad Bastien, Norman Menaud, Michel Aubin, Jim Lundrigan, Robert Jackson, Gaston Brosseau and Charlie Burton.

Once again, congratulations to all of those brave mine rescue personnel who participated in last weekend's competition and to all the other mine rescue volunteers in Ontario. I extend to you the respect and gratitude of all Ontarians for the contribution you have made to workplace safety. Keep up the good work.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): This morning I met with people with

disabilities and their organizations to share with them our plans to create a new income support program for people with disabilities. The Ontario disabilities support program will move people with disabilities off the welfare system and provide them with greater opportunities for independence.

Ontario presently provides the highest level of disability support among Canadian provinces. People who are eligible would have their benefits protected under the new program.

In the Common Sense Revolution we said we would create a new and separate income support program for people with disabilities. We heard from people with disabilities that the current system doesn't meet their needs. We've listened to their concerns and we intend to implement their suggestions.

If the legislation is passed, the Ontario disability support program will provide an income support program designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities. It will ensure that benefits will be protected if a job attempt fails. It will remove the requirements for people to endure unnecessary eligibility testing every one or two years. It will allow people with disabilities to keep more of their liquid assets and compensation awards and provide a higher limit on life insurance policies. It will also enable people to benefit more from gifts and inheritances so that families can provide a more secure future for their sons and daughters.

During our consultations with this community it was made very clear that many people with disabilities can and do want to work. They also told us they don't like labels. They want eligibility criteria that do not limit their opportunities by labelling them as permanently unemployable. The government intends to support them to secure jobs and to reach their potential.

The proposed system is designed with a number of features that would help people with disabilities take advantage of employment opportunities. For example, it would allow them to accept work without worrying about not having their benefits reinstated quickly if they cannot continue with the job.

The proposed program responds to the concerns of people with disabilities and represents significant improvements to income and employment supports. With the Ontario disability support program, our government is taking a leadership role in meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

1350

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I too was at this supposed announcement at Goodwill Industries this morning. It was certainly apparent that a number of people in the community of those with disabilities are looking forward to legislation.

When we asked yesterday in the House what was coming today, we were told, "There's no legislation coming," but what we had was more fanfare. We had a great big fanfare of an announcement to tell us, "No legislation is coming." I guess that was the announcement.

Instead, what we've got is a change. We don't know what the change is. We have individuals with disabilities who are waiting and who asked you via the media this

morning, "How are the criteria going to change?" Minister, you refused to answer the question. The media asked you today: "How will it change? Will there be fewer people on the system once your legislation is passed or will there be more?" Again you refused to answer the question. So we can't help but think that today's fanfare at Goodwill Industries was exactly that: a smoke-and-mirrors operation intended to lull us into believing you're doing something more for the disabled community.

You've reflected on the Common Sense Revolution. May I remind the minister that you said to the disabled community that they would not be cut, that aid to the disabled would not be cut. In your first year as government you cut aid to the disabled. You also said in the Common Sense Revolution, "No new user fees." Minister, every individual, almost without exception, who is disabled often is also on some form of medication. These individuals have been paying user fees since your government took office; and that is a promise that you broke in your own Common Sense Revolution.

You didn't want to highlight for the House today the fact that you are planning to privatize the delivery of these employment supports for individuals with disabilities. In fact, in papers you presented this morning you said, "The proposed employment support system will be delivered by local service coordinators who will be selected through a competitive process based on their ability," etc.

Why didn't you mention today that you are going to subject individuals with disabilities to, and put all those support mechanisms through, a privatization scheme, so that the insurance industry, which today likely the only industry that might be able to qualify and compete to offer these services — I don't know how comfortable the disabled community would feel working with people who are out to make a buck, because that is the bottom line when you talk about privatization.

We have to come back to the definition of "disabled." The minister very much avoided that question today and it's the one we've been asking from the beginning: How is the definition going to change? She said in papers released today that the new definition will cover "substantial as well as severe." That begs the question, what about those who are partially disabled? What about those who are struggling and would be considered marginally employable given a level of employment support?

If those individuals who are not substantially disabled can't jump over the bar in order to get in your system, they won't have any means to access the employment supports. You can show that those people who are disabled enough to qualify for benefits are the sole group that will be able to access the employment supports you introduced today. Those people who aren't disabled enough will never get over the bar you are raising in your new definition, so they cannot access those employment supports.

Minister, you talked today about finding savings of some \$34 million, and that with those moneys you've found, you're going to reinvest in this system. My colleagues on this side understand what reinvestment means when you say it: It's not to be believed. You have

a terrible history of reinvestment so far. In fact, you are not doing it, so it is not to be believed that \$34 million will be found from your system. In fact, you will spend that money in only one way. You'll have fewer people on the system because your criteria will become so stringent that many individuals will never get over the bar you have raised to be classified as disabled and get into a program that would then be very worthwhile for these individuals.

Let us go back to the Common Sense Revolution. Mike Harris promised, "No new user fees." The community of disabled people has been paying user fees since your government took office. Minister, your Premier, Mike Harris, said, "No cuts to the disabled." Minister, in your first year of government you did cut aid to the disabled, so the minister has absolutely no credibility.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I believe very much in giving credit where credit is due. I think the announcement you have made today leads us down a path which has the potential of becoming one of the most significantly positive programs for persons with disabilities in Ontario.

I say that with some caution, of course, because at this point in time we've seen the description of what you intend to do, and as you realize, we've not seen the detail. We don't have the legislation in front of us. There are areas with which we have some grave concerns, and I think persons in the disability community also have concerns, to see how it comes out. But at this point, the direction of establishing a separate income support program for persons with disabilities is very positive. Upon the work done under the previous government in reviewing income support programs, this was one of the major initiatives our government felt was important, along with the establishment of a separate child benefit, which I don't see coming from your government, but that's something we can discuss on another day.

The intent, I think, is good. The kind of flexibility you're looking at building in that allows people who are marginally employable to move in and out of the support program where necessary without requalifying is also important. The kind of pre-employment and employment supports you're suggesting of course are absolutely necessary to make a program like this work.

Let me raise with you some areas of concern we will be watching very closely, though. I have to say, based on the track record of your government, there's a lot of suspicion. It's very surprising to us to see something we think we can agree with coming from your government, given all your actions in so many other areas.

Primarily, the eligibility criteria: It's very positive that you're grandparenting those who are already on the program, but in terms of those who have yet to come to this support program or have their eligibility considered, we worry about the definitions you will put in place. We worry about those people who have multiple health problems, a multiple number of disabilities, and perhaps literacy problems and others which in the past have made it very difficult for them to have a permanent relationship with the workforce. We fear that your eligibility criteria will preclude people like that from getting the supports and help they need and also make them subject to the

kinds of sanctions that are in your workfare program in this province.

We also worry about your commitment to reinvestment. As you go about privatizing vocational rehabilitation services, you say those moneys will grow from the current \$18 million to \$35 million, but there's no mention of moneys we already see in the program, like the \$27 million that's currently spent on supported employment and sheltered workshops, rehab services that are already provided by community agencies. In other areas, and I'll remind you of our debate around child care, we see you making grand promises about moneys you intend to spend and moneys that will be coming in the future, which disappear as subsequent budgets come down.

We see the smoke and mirrors and the shell game going on with different parts of budgets, so we really worry about your government's commitment to reinvestment, and to the parts of the budget you haven't mentioned that will be continued or will continue to grow, and whether or not they become part of a shell game simply to prop up your numbers on reinvestment.

There is much in here that has potential, Minister, on which we would like to work with you when we see your legislation, which we would like to see supporting those members of the disabled community who want to continue to have a relationship with the workplace and who want to continue to live a life independent and with dignity.

1400

We think we can work together to support that, but it will really depend on your commitment to the kind of eligibility criteria and funding that are required and to the spirit of working in partnership with those people and helping people, as opposed to penalizing them, which we see under your workfare scheme and your approach to cutting benefits for social assistance recipients.

If this is a major turn in the direction of the government, if this is a change in your approach to dealing with the people of Ontario, to recognizing real need and trying to meet those needs, you will have the support of the New Democratic Party. If this is yet again another sham like we have seen with your promises not to cut hospitals, your promises to give people a hand up instead of a handout, promises in many other areas that you have broken, then you will see us fighting you tooth and nail.

We hope this is a turning point. We hope this is a positive step. We hope we will see very quickly your Premier live up to his promises to introduce an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, to address other issues of major concern to this very important community. If that is the case, you'll have our support. If not, we'll be there to remind you.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members will be aware that there appears in today's Orders and Notices a notice of an opposition day standing in the name of Mr Sergio. Standing order 42(a) provides for five opposition days in a sessional period. I want to inform the House that the allotment of five opposition days has been used. The notice is therefore out of order and shall be removed from Orders and Notices.

YAD VASHEM

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to honour the presence of eight survivors of the Holocaust who came to the Legislature today to be honoured by the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Ms Mushinski: I rise today on behalf of the government of Ontario and the people of this province to say a simple and heartfelt thank you. Milton Berger, Claire Silverman, Luba Smuschkowitz, Abie Bielak, Arnold Friedman, Jane Zeligman, Joe Kichler and Jean Kichler were honoured earlier this morning for their brave contribution to the struggle against hate and intolerance.

Each of these men and women suffered greatly as a result of discrimination and hate on a scale seldom seen. These eight individuals survived the horrors of the Holocaust, but it is for their work in reminding successive generations of the fate met by six million of their friends and loved ones that we honour them today.

I'm honoured to have this opportunity to join my colleagues in this House in recognizing the efforts of the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem. On this solemn occasion, we have the opportunity to support their important work. We have an opportunity to help spread the message of tolerance and to renew our commitment to stamp out hatred and discrimination wherever it is found.

As my colleague the member for York Mills has said so eloquently in this House, this is the time for us to renew our common resolve and commitment to ensure that we never revisit the horrors of the Holocaust. After all, that is the message of Yad Vashem. We are all entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that future generations never forget.

I implore my fellow members with the powerful words of one writer: "We must learn from the lessons of the past. We must not remember today the hatreds of yesterday."

This province is made up of people from a multitude of backgrounds and beliefs, and we are in a unique position to benefit from the knowledge and convictions of the eight men and women being honoured here today. Their brave example reminds us that hate has no place in a civil society and that government has an obligation to support and enforce that conviction.

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): Today, we join with the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem in honouring eight Jewish Holocaust survivors who lived through the unparalleled violence suffered at the hands of Nazi Germany.

Each year we commemorate Yom Hashoa, the day of remembrance of the Holocaust martyrs and heroes, and remember the six million victims.

The number six million is so large and the enormity of the horror so great that it's difficult to comprehend the magnitude of the atrocities perpetrated in the name of a new order. But it's not difficult to identify with it when you put it down to individual terms and when you

consider that of these six million who perished, approximately 1.5 million were children. Imagine, hundreds of thousands of children who never reached maturity and were not granted the privilege of living their lives, of dreaming, of loving, of playing and laughing. Their only crime: They were Jewish.

I was struck by the significance of this heinous period when at the Yad Vashem presentation this morning three beautiful children — twins Lauren and Zoe, aged 7, and Ryan, aged 9 — asked to pose with the Premier for a photograph. The three Kichler children were excited and laughing and exuded a confidence in their life and their future.

Their grandfather, Joe Kichler, was one of the honorees this morning. He had been an inmate in the Auschwitz concentration camp and was on Schindler's List and participated in the death march into Czechoslovakia. At that time and at that place, Zoe and Ryan and Lauren may not have survived.

Yet there are those revisionist proponents proclaiming that the Holocaust never happened. There's evidence of growing anti-Semitism — cemetery desecrations and synagogue defacings — all of it happening in an environment of supposed enlightenment, human rights and man's humanity to man. We owe it to the six million victims and to the ever-dwindling survivors of the Holocaust to be alert to all these threats, not only to those of the Jewish faith, but to all the members of our society.

We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I rise to join my colleagues in first of all paying tribute to the eight survivors of the Holocaust who are with us today, and through them to all the survivors of this horrible tragedy, and in saying, as my colleagues have said, that it is crucial we continue to show that as a society and as a civilization we will never forget the tragedy that was the Holocaust. In remembering, we are best positioned to ensure that such events never occur again.

It is crucial that we do that and that we show that leadership as the politicians of the highest office in this province, because by setting that direction and showing that leadership, it will ensure that the actions I know are going on throughout our society — and particularly, I want to note, with our young people and among our young people in our schools. It will ensure they understand the horror that was the Holocaust, the fact that over six million people were killed simply because they were Jews.

That is something we all need to understand and, as I say, particularly our young people need to understand, in order to comprehend the thinking that could lead to such an action. It is in applauding the work that continues to go on by these eight individuals and all the others they represent here today that we join with all peoples in this province in condemning the Holocaust and in saying absolutely that we need to do our part to ensure we never forget.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): With us in the Speaker's gallery are the eight survivors of the Holocaust. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce them in the Legislature today. Pardon me if the pronunciations are

less than perfect: Milton Berger, Claire Silverman, Luba Smuschkowitz, Abie Bielak, Arnold Friedman, Jane Zeligman, Joe Kichler and Jean Kichler. Welcome.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): I have a question for the Premier. This weekend marks your government's second anniversary and your record proves that your Common Sense Revolution is nothing but a hoax.

You said classroom funding would be guaranteed. Now you're setting out to destroy the public education system. You said you wouldn't close hospitals. Now you're closing 22, with more to come. You said no cuts to the environment. You took \$121 million from that ministry, a 42% decline in its budget.

You promised hundreds of thousands of new jobs. You are nowhere near your targets. Seniors are hurting, students are hurting, youth are hurting. You tried to make all of these people believe that you had the answers.

Premier, how can you possibly expect any of these people to believe you today?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think, by any objective measure, we have accomplished more in undoing the damage of your government and the NDP government over the last lost-decade period in this province than anyone thought achievable or possible.

We have moved quickly to undo that damage. We have turned a climate that was very negative. We were perceived inside and outside of Ontario as not a good place to invest or do business and we were paying the price for that. I can tell you that now the business community inside Ontario, across Canada and around the world are more and more saying Ontario is not only becoming a better place to invest in, to create jobs in, to live in and to work in, but is actually moving in a path that will be even better in 1997, better in 1998, better in 1999. They do not credit the lost decade of the NDP and the Liberal disastrous administration. They credit the Common Sense Revolution.

Mr Cordiano: The people of this province are beginning to see the real Mike Harris. They see you for what you really are, Mr Premier: insensitive, cold-hearted and now you're even arrogant. You're destroying public education, you're destroying public health and you're dismissing people in need. That's what the real story is.

You said no cuts to seniors or the disabled. You slapped on \$225 million in new user fees. You said no cuts to the north. You've cut highway maintenance, you've cut community support, you've cut mining initiatives.

Premier, you made a solemn promise to the people of this province that you would resign if you didn't keep your promises. But here you are sitting in your seat today. Does your word today count for anything any more?

Hon Mr Harris: I have been criticized by some for moving too quickly. I've been criticized by others for

doing what I said I would do. I think you will find most objective observers would say that no political leader in Ontario has consistently done what they said they were going to do more than this administration has done.

This has led, for example, to former NDP member Gary Malkowski today — you talked about the disabled — saying: "Thank you, Mr Harris. Thank you, Ontario PC government. This is the happiest day of my life. On behalf of disabled people in the province of Ontario, thank you for living up to the commitment. Thank you for having the courage to help the disabled people as they have not been helped in the previous 12 years." That's the kind of recognition we are getting.

Mr Cordiano: The Premier is deluding himself. He thinks he's telling people the truth, and in fact nothing could be further from the truth. He said he would not close hospitals and what do you have today? You have a Premier who's cutting hospitals in every community across this province.

Even your restructuring commission can't get its numbers right. You're cutting classrooms. You're cutting nurses. You're cutting the environment. You're stealing money from seniors and the disabled. You're doing everything to undermine public service in this province, Premier. You guaranteed funding for law enforcement. Then you cut police services; you cut the OPP; you cut court budgets. Premier, do you have any conscience left at all for the people of this province whom you're hurting most?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me make it clear that nobody pretended to undo the massive overspending that led to a \$100-billion debt, the \$11-billion deficit. We never said it would be easy. We said it would be difficult. We said that the total debt would in fact go up while we were getting it under control.

Quite frankly, I think you will find that in any objective measure of downsizing the public sector, as we said we would do, of making sure that in spending reductions we're cutting out the fat, not the services, not the programs, in the various ministries, we are accomplishing these objectives. I think most would say either today or in the future when the vision of a seamless health care delivery — modern, efficient, new equipment, new technology — is delivered on, an education system that rewards excellence, not how much money you spend in it, and a system of compassion for the needy that directs those dollars right to those —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. New question.

EDUCATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. Your government this week brought in legislation that simply rolls over the rights of 700,000 people, and you did it with no consultation of any kind. Custodians and secretaries and others who work at our schools got caught in this move, and you're going to bring in your own attack on teachers next.

It is clear that no one is prepared to accept this kind of gutting of their rights, and I can tell you that no one who cares about public education is prepared to let you gut

our school system. Minister, are you ready to declare war on absolutely everyone and create absolute chaos in this province just to ram through your agenda?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): In answer to the member opposite, no. In fact, I'm willing to work with everyone in the school sector to have a system of education in Ontario that delivers the best in terms of student achievement of any province in Canada. That's what we are doing and that's why we're making the changes that we're making.

Mrs McLeod: If this government was prepared to work with people, it wouldn't have to go down this road. If your government wasn't so determined to close hospitals, you wouldn't have to be attacking health care workers. If you weren't trying to take control of education so that you can gut the funding, you wouldn't be forcing through unworkable amalgamations and attacking custodians, secretaries, teachers and trustees. You really don't seem to care who gets hurt as you charge ahead. You certainly don't seem to care about public education. I believe you are deliberately setting up public education for failure and then you can step in with privatization to solve the problems you have created.

Minister, if you do care at all about education, will you lift the siege? Will you sit down and actually talk to the people who care about it and make it work so that we can avoid the chaos ahead?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The member opposite talks about a setup for failure. Let me tell you about a setup for failure. A setup for failure might have been your government, which allowed a funding system that treated some of our students in Ontario as second-class citizens to go forward. That might have been a setup for failure. A government that failed to meet the curriculum needs of our students by having rigorous standards, by assessing them on a regular basis: That was a setup for failure. As a matter of fact, all of your policies and the policies of the previous government are the reasons why we have been failing our students, failing to meet their needs, failing to have them and their abilities go to the head of the class, and why our students are mired in the middle of the road in terms of the results from pan-Canadian international tests.

That is not good enough for this government, it's not good enough for the people of Ontario, and most particularly it's not good enough for the students of Ontario. That is why we're making these changes.

1420

Mrs McLeod: Let's talk about what we know for a fact about what this minister has done. We know this minister has done nothing that actually benefits the needs of students, as much as he talks about that. We know this minister does care about finding a way to take \$1 billion out of education. We know this minister has already cut \$533 million and he has gutted junior kindergarten and adult education. We know that he has destroyed local decision-making in education and that he is now ready to declare war on education workers and on teachers. All of this hurts kids. None of it helps students.

Minister, you have said that change is about turning caterpillars into butterflies, and you said that if convincing the caterpillars to change doesn't work, you some-

times just have to run over them. You're clearly running over a lot of caterpillars, Minister: trustees, teachers, secretaries, custodians, parents and, in the end, students. How does it help students when you force through your changes and run over the people who make the system work?

Hon Mr Snobelen: As I expressed to the member opposite in her first question, we are very willing and want to work together with people in the education system in Ontario no matter what role they play. We have made changes to the governance of education, to lower the cost of bureaucracy and the cost of the politicians, some 1,900 politicians involved in education in the province of Ontario. We want to reduce the expenditure there.

We want to have a funding system so that we can meet the needs of every student in Ontario, so we don't have second-class students. We want to make sure that our curriculum is demanding so that our students are the best in Canada, not in the middle of the road. Those are the changes. Those are reasons for those changes. We are moving forward as quickly as we possibly can to have a school system that finally matches the abilities of our students, doesn't hold them back and doesn't hold them down.

Our only regret is these changes weren't brought in 10 years ago under your government, why it had to wait until now, why we failed those 10 years of students instead of being able to provide them with these services and with a program designed for them. I'm proud of our changes and they're for the students of Ontario.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Premier concerning a conflict of interest in the conduct of a minister's political staff. We understand that a company called Revenue Properties is bidding for a charity casino. We called Revenue Properties and were told that a Mr Paul Burns is working as a consultant to the company through Hill and Knowlton.

What is interesting here is that Mr Paul Burns used to work in the office of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations as a political staffer. That's the ministry that is designing and engineering the whole charity casino program. He resigned from that office five days before the request for proposals on charity casinos went out. Now he's working as an adviser to one of the companies who wants to bid.

Premier, don't you think this is improper? Don't you think it's improper that somebody takes part in the design —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much, Leader. Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, and the minister can explain why.

The Speaker: Premier, you can't answer the question and then refer it. You know you have to answer the question now. Supplementary.

Interjection.

Mr Speaker: Member for Renfrew North, that is out of order. I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I would want to withdraw of course, Mr Speaker.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I'm alarmed by your attitude in these situations. We had your government House leader back in April come into the Legislature and say the government intended to pass legislation to safeguard the public interest, to ensure that people who work within the civil service or in ministers' offices on privatization schemes or on schemes such as the charity casinos would not then be able to leave the civil service or leave a political staff and go over to work for companies that they have been negotiating with and profit then from the government's activities. But that seems to be exactly what you're allowing here.

Someone who worked in the minister's office, who probably had intimate knowledge of the whole charity casino scheme, then leaves and now goes over to advise the private sector and he in effect makes money off your government's policies. The public interest loses, the private interest profits.

Do you support that? Can you possibly support that? I think it should be referred to the Integrity Commissioner today.

Hon Mr Harris: I know the minister would be pleased to respond.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The leader of the third party is raising a good point. Mr Burns did leave our office prior to the release of the RFP, and I understand that Mr Burns had consulted the Integrity Commissioner at that point. He discussed his departure with the Integrity Commissioner, who advised him that he had no concerns as long as Mr Burns had left prior to the release of the RFP.

This whole process with the RFPs has always been intended to be a transparent and arm's-length process. Clearly our office is not involved with the specifics of the acceptance of the RFPs. Certainly we have no involvement with the selection. That's because it's supposed to be a transparent process.

There are some very important, very stringent provisions right in the RFP which I direct you to on page 19, which indicate that any proponent or any representative who makes any attempt to contact any of the following persons directly or indirectly with respect to the RFP will lead to disqualification, and there's a list.

Mr Hampton: I think we're seeing this government's standards. I think we're seeing that. It will be okay for someone to work on a privatization strategy, it will be okay for someone to work on a charity casino strategy, and then just before the critical moment it will be okay, under this government's standards, for that person to go over to the private sector and advise a private sector company as to how they may profit, how they may benefit from this government's policies. It is okay, according to this government's standards, that the public interest suffer and the private interest profit as a result of this government's policies.

This has happened in Great Britain. That's the tragedy here. In Great Britain under the Thatcher government, privatizations went on. Government officials then joined the private sector and made hundreds of millions of

dollars at public expense. Your own House leader admits this is wrong. Your own House leader admits that you need to bring in legislation to protect the public interest. When are you going to do that? When are you going to put the public interest in front of the interests of your private friends?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I assume the leader of the third party was not expecting the answer we gave, in that he was suggesting we consult the Integrity Commissioner. These are not our standards as government; this is the standard of the Integrity Commissioner. As I said before, and I direct the leader of the third party to this again, Mr Burns consulted the Integrity Commissioner prior to taking any actions. You were suggesting we consult with him. That was already done.

Clearly there are severe penalties for any type of violation of these very stringent rules, including a clear disqualification of any proponent who attempts to speak about the RFP to any of these listed members. Surely if the criteria compromised the potential bidder, there really is no advantage here. But I draw once again attention to the fact that the leader of the third party suggested that the Integrity Commissioner be consulted. That was done. He said there was nothing wrong with the process.

1430

WAGE PROTECTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Labour, but I would say to the government that you've got a real problem here if people are going to be allowed to profit through their experience in the government by advising private sector companies.

To the Minister of Labour, on Tuesday you introduced a bill that not only declares war on the public sector labour movement but will also take \$25 million out of the pockets of some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario. I'm talking about the fact that you are doing away with the only program that helps workers who have lost their jobs, the wage protection program. You're doing away with the wage protection program, the only program that paid vacation pay and pay that was due to workers who have lost their jobs because the company has gone bankrupt or has moved to another location.

Minister, why are you picking on some of the most vulnerable workers in Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): As you know, we were the only province in all of Canada to have the EWPP. We have determined that it is more appropriate that the employer debt should not be funded by the taxpayers. We have been attempting to work with ministers of labour from across Canada to encourage them to support us in asking the federal government to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, because we feel that unpaid wages and vacation pay should be first in line when there's a bankruptcy in front of the banks. I would encourage you to ask your colleagues in governments elsewhere to support us.

Mr Hampton: Maybe you can explain this to me. In 1995, when Epton Industries, in your home community, went bankrupt, when workers demanded a public inquiry, you were full of praise for the employee wage protection

program. You thought it was great. You called it the best in Canada. You said that it was necessary to protect the wages workers were due when their company closes down, goes bankrupt, without paying their wages. Can you tell me what has changed between 1995, when it was the best program in Canada and you highly recommended it, and now?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you know, this program has not lived up to your expectations. When you introduced the program, you anticipated that the money that would be flowing out from the government would be recovered from employers. Unfortunately, that has not happened. Although we have paid out a substantial amount of money, we have been able to recover only —

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Stiff the workers.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Hamilton Centre, I'm warning you to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Cochrane North, I warn you to come to order as well.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have been able to collect only about 10% of the money that was owed by employers. Unfortunately, we have determined that it should be the employers that are paying the wages and vacation pay owed. I would just say again to you, work with us to convince the federal government to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

Mr Hampton: If that's your argument, then the way you would have proceeded is like this: You would have begun a public process to convince the federal government, and you would have wound down the wage protection program only after you had begun that process and it had started to show some possibilities of success.

This is plain and simple, and it's very clear. Your government has tax gifts for the likes of the chair of the Bank of Montreal, whose income is \$3.9 million a year; you have tax gifts for him. You have tax gifts for every other corporate executive on Bay Street. But when it comes to workers who have lost their jobs because the company has gone bankrupt or closed their doors or moved out of the jurisdiction and has left unpaid wage bills behind, you have nothing. You're prepared to pick on some of the most vulnerable people in Ontario at the same time that you give your largess to your corporate friends on Bay Street. That's what's happening here. This is wrong. What are you going to do about it to fix it?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As you know, we were the only province in all of Canada to have such a program. In fact, it was not supported by NDP governments in either Saskatchewan or British Columbia. We have been working with them for the last year to ensure that the federal government is persuaded to change the act and make sure the employees have the first priority as to wages and vacation pay owed.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a question to the Premier. We have reached the second-year anniversary of your election, and we think it's time to review your fiscal performance.

Today Dominion Bond Rating Service issued a report card on the handling of the finances. They have refused to upgrade the province's credit rating. We still have the same credit rating as Bob Rae, two below the highest rating available for a province, and last week Standard and Poor's also refused to upgrade your credit rating.

Premier, when Bob Rae was given the same rating, you accused him of mismanaging the finances of the province. In light of these ratings, can the people of Ontario conclude that you too are mismanaging the finances of the province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Finance is anxious to answer this question.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): What the honourable member doesn't point out in the Dominion Bond Rating Service announcement today is:

"The ratings reflect the province's strong commitment to achieving its deficit targets, reduction of program spending to a more sustainable level, and a well-diversified economy that is now beginning to grow at a stronger pace. Other factors supportive of the rating include: (1) an improving business climate, (2) the third-lowest debt-to-GDP ratio...of the provinces..., (3) access to a variety of capital markets, (4) minimal exposure to foreign exchange risk on the province's debt.... The province is currently on track to meet its balanced budget objective by the year 2000-01."

Why didn't you add all those quotes when you asked your question?

Mr Kwinter: I'd like to ask the minister, why didn't you conclude the remarks that were made by the Dominion Bond Rating Service? Let me tell you what they said: "...implementation of the 30% personal income tax rate reduction increases the province's reliance on continuing strong economic growth...."

If there's a downturn in the economy, your plan is at risk. It also says: "...restructuring changes to health care, education, and municipal government responsibilities beginning in 1998" — your mega-dumping scheme, are putting Ontario's finances at risk.

Now two independent, highly respected credit agencies have said that your financial plan for Ontario is not worthy of a credit rating higher than that of Bob Rae. Will you listen to Standard and Poor's and the Dominion Bond Rating Service, reconsider your tax cut and ensure that the mega-dumping does not further erode Ontario's credit rating?

Hon Mr Eves: I am concerned about the market rate at which the Ontario government can borrow money. If I might add, today Ontario is borrowing money at 16 basis points above similar Canada 10-year bonds.

When you were in government and had your AAA credit rating in 1990, you were borrowing at 54 basis points over government of Canada 10-year bonds. In 1989, when you had a AAA credit rating, you were borrowing at 50 basis points above Canada 10-year bonds. That's what the market thought of your government. That's what they thought of your ability to manage the finances of this province.

We're at the lowest level the province has ever been in its entire history. I go by what we can borrow money at, what the people internationally think of us, and they obviously think a lot more of us than they did of you and your government.

1440

CARIBANA

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship. I was dismayed to learn, and I hope that you will feel likewise, that Toronto could lose one of its biggest cultural events and tourism draws because the Metro police are saying they won't provide officers for the annual Caribana parade route.

I'm sure you know that last year Caribana drew over a million people to the Toronto area and generated business and tax dollars for both the city and the province. Obviously, if the Caribana parade were not to proceed, that would be a tremendous loss.

I would like to ask you to do something which won't cost you a dime but might in fact save the parade: Bring together the organizers of the Caribana event with the Metro police to try to resolve the impasse that seems to have been reached. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): Let me start off by saying that in the summer of 1995, my ministry advised all organizations, including the Caribbean Cultural Committee, that the government of Ontario would no longer provide funding for festivals.

In order to assist the Caribbean Cultural Committee with the transition towards greater sustainability, we approved \$67,500 for long-term marketing initiatives. That was in keeping with the Metro chairman's task force report on the future of Caribana, which apparently the CCC chose largely to ignore.

I would suggest that if they wish to continue discussions with Metro, which did come up with a business plan to assist them to become more self-sufficient, they should do that.

Mr Silipo: I know that English is my second language, but I think I was very clear in what I asked the minister, and it wasn't to provide more money. I think you should provide more money but I'm not asking you that today. I'm asking you to do something, and I will repeat, that won't cost you a dime, which is to bring the parties together — the police, the organizers of the event and anybody else who needs to be brought together — to exercise some leadership to ensure that Metro and the province do not lose this great event, an event that is a source of pride not just for the black community but for the whole Metropolitan Toronto community and a great source of revenue to our tax coffers.

Minister, once again, will you bring the parties together to try to resolve the impasse that seems to have developed which may jeopardize the holding of this year's Caribana event?

Hon Ms Mushinski: It's my understanding that the parties have agreed to come together. It is my understanding further that they may even be meeting at this moment, as we speak.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): The area I represent has two very large universities, the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, along with Conestoga College and many secondary institutions.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I need to know whom your question is to.

Mr Leadston: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

For the young people in my area, but more important, for the men and women in universities, community colleges and secondary schools in Ontario, a great concern is summer employment. Could the honourable minister share with us what initiatives employers will be taking this summer to provide jobs for our young people?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): First of all, I'm very pleased to inform the House that we are seeing the most favourable summer job forecast in five years. I think that's a very important point.

Recent studies which surveyed employers in 23 Ontario locations found the following: Close to 85% of those locations surveyed are planning to increase hiring in June, July and August this year, and more than 60,000 net new jobs have been created in the past two months, as the Minister of Finance told us yesterday. I am confident there will be many more jobs created for students this summer. It's the unanimous view of private sector forecasters that this positive trend is going to continue into 1997 and 1998. That is good news for our young people.

Mr Leadston: Are there any other initiatives that we as members within our ridings or as representatives of government can take to assist young people in finding employment this summer?

Hon Mr Saunderson: In response to the supplementary question, already our ministry has announced 3,000 summer jobs available for students. That is very good news for students. These jobs are going to be found all over the province.

Our government's job creation policy is to keep on working to cut deficits, cut taxes and also eliminate barriers to investment in this province. The recent budget provides an extra \$6 million to support summer jobs for students. As a result of this, all of the foregoing, 40,000 students will get job experience this year, and that will provide them with good income for this summer.

This is only a beginning. Our government plans to maintain the good momentum in job creation that we have established.

YOUNG OFFENDERS' FACILITY

Mr Peter North (Elgin): My question today is to the Solicitor General. I want to ask a question with regard to Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre and the events that took place last year during the strike. A number of people who worked at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre have been fired, as a result of charges, by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. I wonder if I could ask the Solicitor General: The people who were fired, sir, are they guilty?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I think the member knows that I can't comment with respect to the guilt or innocence of any individual who is facing police charges. Their matters will be dealt with in due course through the courts and I'm not going to comment beyond that.

Mr North: I thank the minister for the comment. It's interesting. I have a copy of a letter of separation, I guess you would call it, to one of the people who worked at Elgin-Middlesex, and one of the paragraphs says:

"As indicated in the allegations provided to you, information obtained by ministry investigators indicates that excessive and uncontrolled force was used during the admission process and related events. In the absence of any evidence to refute these allegations, I find based on the balance of probabilities that the information presented to me to be substantiated."

What I want to ask you is this — and this letter is signed by a gentleman named Mr Palmer, carbon copied to Mr McKerrell, your acting assistant deputy minister at this time. If you can't say whether or not they are guilty, and the gentleman sitting next to you, I assume, would say they are innocent until proven guilty, would you be kind enough to reinstate these people to their positions, on suspension with pay, until such time as they are actually convicted of a crime?

Hon Mr Runciman: I respect the member's concern for some of his constituents, but I think he's mixing apples and oranges. Initially his question dealt with police charges, which will be before the courts. The second issue, with respect to disciplinary action, was related to an internal investigation and the findings of that internal investigation justified, in the view of ministry personnel, that disciplinary action was warranted. The two cases are quite different. The disciplinary action was based on an internal investigation.

Mr North: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. As a point of clarification, I guess —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It can only be a point of order.

Mr North: I guess it's a point of order, Mr Speaker: The minister suggests that I'm trying to mix apples and oranges here. In fact I'm not trying to mix apples and oranges; I'm quoting from stationery from his ministry.

The Speaker: I appreciate that. That's probably not a point of clarification either. It's a point of debate and right now that's not a point of order.

Mr North: I'm not trying to debate.

The Speaker: I understand that, but maybe at a later date or in a further question period you would express those opinions. It's not a point of order. New question.

1450

CARIBANA

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Maybe I could ask the Solicitor General and maybe he could answer this question. He's the top cop in the province. As you know, Solicitor General, the Caribana festival is a showcase parade that's in danger of being cancelled due to the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force indicating they will not offer security support, as they do for every other parade in the city.

Caribana has been giving great cultural enrichment to this country for over 30 years. As well, it has provided hundreds of jobs to accommodate the tens of thousands of visitors, making it the largest one-day festival of its kind in North America. According to Decima Research, the estimated revenue exceeds \$200 million in the Metro Toronto area, with no other annual event drawing more visitors to Toronto hotels, restaurants and attractions. Over 750,000 people attend this celebration.

Is the minister aware of the situation, and if so, what are the minister's plans to ensure this successful festival is not placed in jeopardy due to the withdrawal of police support?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I'm not sure this is a question I should be responding to, but I will deal with the policing side of it.

I do not get involved with that sort of issue with respect to a decision made by a local force. The Caribana folks have an opportunity, as I understand they will be doing, of approaching the police services board and Metro council to ask for reconsideration and perhaps some better understanding with respect to the economic benefits, as you pointed out, so that the necessary accommodations can be reached to ensure the carnival and the parade proceed. Certainly I'm a strong supporter and the members of the government are strong supporters and we would like to see it proceed.

But I gather from press reports there are also some concerns with respect to a security report being available and meeting time lines with respect to having a security report provided to Metro police. If indeed the press reports are accurate, that has not occurred.

Mr Curling: I am surprised that you are only going by the press reports. You know that as of June 6 they were supposed to present their plan. June 6 is not here yet, Minister, and they are being cancelled before the plan has been provided.

Could you then report to the House on Monday as to the status of where the police are with this? Notwithstanding that, if they have not found a settlement, I am prepared to work along with you, the Caribana people and the police so we can have a resolution to this.

I pointed out the economic aspect of it so that you would understand what we are about to lose. It doesn't seem that the Minister of Citizenship understands that. I know Mr Saunderson, the Minister of Tourism, is understanding of that. Would you three get together and realize how important this is? If not, then Monday I am prepared to work with you and the police and the Caribana people to resolve this matter.

Hon Mr Runciman: I will review the appropriateness of the request.

NORTHERN TRAIN SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Earlier this week, the people of the city of Timmins, and I would say of all northeastern Ontario, learned through the Timmins Daily Press what we have understood for some time now was possibly to happen: that your govern-

ment's cuts to the ONTC may result in the loss of service of the Ontario Northland train from Cochrane to the city of Toronto.

My question is simply this: Can you assure us and assure the people of northeastern Ontario that you will not allow the Northlander to stop services in northeastern Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member of the third party for the question. It's a good question. The ONTC has been looking at its own operations for some time, as he is well aware. It's governed by a board of directors who have been looking at all aspects of their operation, and they'll be issuing a report that the government will look at. I am sure they are taking that into consideration. I'd also like to remind him that that rail passenger service is heavily subsidized by both the provincial government and the federal government.

Mr Bisson: That's the point, Minister. The train runs because there's a subsidy from the province of Ontario. We know that you've cut that subsidy by \$10 million, putting in jeopardy the service to communities from Cochrane to North Bay that rely on the train to get out of those communities into southern Ontario.

A year ago you shut down the only airline they had. Now you're just about to shut down the only rail service they have. At what point are you going to stand up for the people of northeastern Ontario and make sure there is some method of transportation for the people in those communities to come into Toronto or into southern Ontario?

I ask you again: Minister, will you stand up for the people of northeastern Ontario and assure us today that you will not allow the Northlander to stop services in northeastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Hodgson: If the member would check his facts, there has been no cut to the subsidy for the particular rail service he talks about.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Don't say that in this House. You cut that subsidy by \$10 million.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Sudbury East.

New question.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. A week ago I went to Scarborough's Volunteer Recognition Night. Volunteerism is alive and well in Scarborough. This well-attended event is in its 41st year.

Scarborough Mayor Frank Faubert, in his speech to volunteers, said that he was saddened by this, the last Scarborough Volunteer Recognition Night. He said that amalgamation will destroy such events. Minister, I don't believe people will stop volunteering just because the structure of municipal government is changing. How can we ensure that programs like this continue?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): That's probably the best question I've heard in the House today and I would like to thank my colleague

from Scarborough for it. I think the only reason the mayor might be saddened is that he won't be there next year; there's a good chance of that.

I see absolutely no reason whatsoever why volunteers would not continue to be recognized and appreciated in the new unified city of Toronto. I'm sure the community councils and the neighbourhood committees will want to take an active interest in voluntarism. Most municipalities recognize their volunteers for the time and effort they put into very important projects, and I'm sure the new unified city of Toronto will continue to do so.

Mr Jim Brown: As you are well aware, volunteers are essential to any community. There are those naysayers who claim that volunteers will disappear next year —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I appreciate the differences of opinion on this, but it's important that we hear the question.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I want to hear it.

The Speaker: Well, I'm pleased about that. Let's hear it.

Mr Jim Brown: There are those naysayers who claim that volunteers will disappear next year as Scarborough becomes part of the unified Toronto. One Scarborough city councillor said amalgamation would cost kids; he stated that in a larger municipality fewer people would volunteer to ensure that programs and sports teams we presently enjoy would continue.

It is volunteers who make community life worthwhile. How can we ensure that people will still volunteer and that voluntarism will continue to flourish in a united Toronto?

Hon Mr Leach: Many of the naysayers my colleague the member for Scarborough West speaks of are right across the hall from us.

I can assure you that when the deputants came to the committees on the new unified city many of them stated that they would desire and intended to become involved to ensure that voluntarism remained a very high priority in the new unified city of Toronto. They absolutely guaranteed this government that they would do it. I have absolutely no doubt that the residents of all parts of Toronto, whether it's Etobicoke or Scarborough or the existing city of Toronto, will continue to stay involved in the very important volunteer work they do.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a real question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Some of your own Tory backbench MPPs are telling many municipal councils, including the councillors in Ottawa-Carleton, not to worry about the municipal forum because the government plans to delay municipal elections this year by a year. Would you come clean —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Do you know what, folks? I can't tell you how to answer and I can't tell them how to ask. It matters not. They can ask questions any way they please.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Ottawa-Rideau, I can stop people from heckling. Please come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, will you come clean and make it clear today and guarantee that elections for municipal councils, regional councils, whether in unstructured areas or restructured areas, and school boards will be held this November clear across the province, including Ottawa-Carleton, including Hamilton-Wentworth and including Metro Toronto, and that the councils and boards that will be elected will serve their full three-year term? Will you guarantee that today?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I have to tell the member opposite that that's not quite as good a question as I had from my colleague in Scarborough, but it's a pretty good question. Yes, I would be more than pleased to advise the members opposite that elections will be held in November for municipalities across Ontario.

The city of Ottawa in particular has started a process. The 11 mayors in the region have agreed to a process that is under way at the present time. What happens in the city of Ottawa will depend on the outcome of that locally driven process that's under way at the present time. They selected a citizens' committee to look at possible restructuring, and we want to see what the results of that restructuring are and what those recommendations are before we make any decisions.

1500

Mr Gerretsen: Answers like that don't help the situation because, on the one hand, you're saying yes, elections will be held clear across the province, but on the other hand, you're saying it depends on what happens in Ottawa-Carleton. This is really the problem in a lot of those municipalities because they don't know whether to believe what you say one day or the next day.

Anyway, can you give me an unequivocal answer to this question? I understand that Gardner Church has done a report for you with respect to the Ottawa-Carleton restructuring. Will you make that report public and has that report been submitted to you?

Hon Mr Leach: I can absolutely assure the member opposite that there is no restructuring report on the city of Ottawa by Gardner Church that I'm aware of. Mr Church was sent up to Ottawa to facilitate a meeting between the various municipalities. He did that; he got the communities together. The communities have now agreed on a local process on how to look at restructuring. They've selected a citizens' committee chosen by the region and chosen by the 11 municipalities.

I encourage Ottawa to get on with that restructuring plan, and we'll be pleased to deal with the recommendations when the municipalities bring them forward to us.

INCO STRIKE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question to the Minister of Labour. You will know that on Monday night at midnight picket lines went up at all Inco operations in Sudbury. We now have 4,700 workers in our community who are on strike. The direct Inco payroll to these employees per week is in the order of \$5 million. Over and above that is the money that goes to contractors

and businesses which supply goods and services to Inco, and that is estimated to be about one third of the \$5-million payroll which goes to Inco employees.

On Tuesday the union contacted the mediation officer and the company to get negotiations under way again, but so far the company has refused to reply. I'm calling on you today to contact the company and urge Inco to get back to the bargaining table to end this dispute. Are you prepared to call Inco and do that today, Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): As the member opposite well knows, the mediation attempts have thus far failed, but our mediation officer does stand ready to assist both of those parties and that mediation will take place through the normal process when both parties are prepared to seriously begin bargaining again.

Ms Martel: I'm not sure if you understand the seriousness of the situation. We have 4,700 people on strike in our community at the present time. We have hundreds and hundreds more who are facing a loss of income because they supply goods and services to Inco and Inco is on strike. Inco, on the other hand, made some C\$500 million in profits last year. Last fall this same company provided a \$500,000 wage increase to both its president and the CEO, yet at the table the company was not prepared to put a cent on the table for an across-the-board wage increase to the workers.

This strike represents a serious financial loss to many, many families in our community. The union is prepared to negotiate. The company refuses to reply. Are you prepared to call the company and urge them to get back to the table so that we can find a positive resolution to this situation?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member opposite knows, the Ministry of Labour is always prepared and ready to assist with mediation. In fact, we have been more involved with Inco this time than at any time in the past. This is the first time in 15 years that they have called upon our mediation office. We stand ready to assist and we will be there at the appropriate time to give the necessary assistance.

SUPPORT FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Some of my constituents have inquired whether people receiving disability benefits currently would lose those benefits under proposals coming from the ministry. I'd like to ask the ministry, are their concerns valid or have they been overblown in the media?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you very much for that excellent question. I can understand the concern that was raised when a particular group this week went out and said that some 140,000 individuals were going to be arbitrarily cut off the system, which is not the case. As you have stated, people who are currently eligible for the program, people with disabilities who are on FBA, will be transferred to the new program when it's up and running.

Mr Hudak: Another question from constituents in my office this past Friday dealt with how people with disabilities are treated when they go into the workforce.

Let's say, for example, they leave disability to get a job and the job doesn't work out, to get back on disability sometimes takes months of waiting before they can be reassessed and put back on disability if appropriate.

My question to the minister is, how can she answer that question for my constituents in terms of how she will address this problem, this red tape, in the future?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Another excellent question. The way we are going to be responding to that is by removing that red tape so those individuals with disabilities who have the opportunity to try a job to see if they have the physical stamina for it, for example, if someone's recuperating from a particular condition, if that job attempt does fail, there will be rapid reinstatement so they will go back on to the income support program with no disruption to their benefits.

POLLUTION CONTROL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. This morning your Minister of Environment gave a speech at the Delta Chelsea Hotel. In his speech he suggested that the province is looking at something called an emissions trading project. What this means, and it happens in the United States, is that companies will be given points for emission standards. As you go over those standards and those limits, you lose points. When you've totally exhausted your points, which means you've polluted the air badly, you then can buy more points from another company and continue to pollute the air and basically continue to do what you're doing.

This is happening because you have given up regulatory controls. This is happening because you have given up on trying to protect the environment. This system is one that allows the companies to simply monitor themselves, and once they break the law enough times they can just borrow some more points to keep breaking the law.

Premier, do you believe this is the appropriate way for environmental protection in Ontario? Should we allow companies to simply continue to buy a licence to pollute as they do in the United States?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The minister could probably explain in far better detail than I, but I am assured that the pilot project he announced is supported by a great number of people and is in place in other jurisdictions to continually ratchet down the emissions. We are following on the lead of governments that have continually moved tougher and tougher, and we even tougher again.

I would like you to know that the other condition of the pilot project is that nothing in any letter of understanding in the attempt to try the pilot project will allow any participating industry to skirt Ontario's environmental laws, so it must be within all the environmental laws of the province of Ontario.

Mr Agostino: It's obvious you don't get it. What the minister is proposing — and this would be equal in transportation — is this: You start with 15 points when you get your licence. Once you drive recklessly, you speed, you break the law, you go through stoplights and

you lose your 15 points, you go to your neighbour, who's a good driver, and you buy five or 10 of those points and continue driving, actually speeding and going through stoplights. That's exactly what the minister is proposing we do here with emission standards in Ontario, and that is totally unacceptable.

In the minister's own speech, he acknowledges the fact that it is known as a licence to pollute. That's all you are doing; you're allowing people to buy a licence to pollute the air in Ontario. Instead of going after the bad corporate citizens and the bad polluters, you're allowing them to buy more licence and more ability to pollute from the good corporate citizens who don't use up those points. I hope you understand that clearly.

Will you stand up today and assure the House that you're not going to get into a situation in Ontario where we're simply allowing people to purchase the ability to pollute even more than they are today?

Hon Mr Harris: I want to be very clear, and the minister was very clear today. He said this is not a licence to pollute and it is not a licence to skirt all existing environmental laws in proceeding with this pilot project.

I might say to the member from Hamilton that the current Minister of Environment has embarked upon a number of initiatives on pollution emissions, constantly trying to toughen up regulations, just recently in your area. In fact, the Hamilton Spectator said: "Sterling's move is a good one. He has launched a worthwhile initiative. Oddly, the move has been criticized by opposition Liberal MPP Dominic Agostino." The Hamilton Spectator goes on and says, "He should cut his irresponsible partisanship and work with Sterling for positive solutions." That's what Hamilton thinks of you.

1510

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to Bill 136. This is a point of order of which I gave you notice that I would be tabling today in the House.

Bill 136, as you know, is the Public Sector Transition Stability Act; that's the short name of the act. The case that I want to put to you is that this bill should in fact be ruled out of order by the Chair because it is in effect an omnibus bill which exceeds the limits that convention and parliamentary practice have placed on omnibus legislation.

This legislation was introduced on Tuesday for first reading. I would have brought it to your attention at that time but, as you know, there is no requirement in this Legislature for copies of the bill to be provided in advance to opposition parties, so we did not receive a copy of that until it was tabled. As I reviewed it yesterday, I became aware of this issue and informed you I would be bringing it forward to the Legislature today. I would also point out that the bill has still as of this time not been printed and circulated to all members of the Legislature.

In making my arguments today, you may recognize some of the precedents that are being cited. These

arguments have been brought forward before in this Legislature, in particular with respect to Bill 26, the omnibus legislation.

At that point in time, the Speaker of the day, Speaker McLean, ruled that there was no precedent that he knew of which empowered him to split legislation. In the point I am making to you today, I'm requesting not that you split legislation but that you recognize that the cumulative effect and ever-enlarging scope of omnibus bills provide you with an opportunity to intervene to protect the interests of all members of the assembly; not to split the legislation, as I said, but in effect to rule the legislation out of order and compel the government to introduce new legislation should it choose to do so.

Let me briefly cite our objections to the wide-ranging omnibus bill.

We do not object to legislation which amends many statutes. In fact, we can see a number of examples of that in this particular Parliament, bills the government has brought forward which seek to amend many statutes. We may have objected to the content of those bills but not to the process that was involved or to the fact that the government had the right to introduce this type of legislation. We do, however, believe it is a problem when omnibus legislation contains very significant legislative initiatives which are not compatible with the theme of the legislation, and that is the case I want to make today.

Beauchesne has this to say about omnibus legislation: "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines covering the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill."

In this case, the purpose of the legislation that is before us in Bill 136 is clearly to change the nature of employer-employee relations in the broader public sector. These are changes to collective bargaining in the public sector and they require amendment of a number of different acts which are relevant to the theme of the legislation, those acts involving firefighters, police officers, hospital employees and others.

Within this bill there is inclusion of a provision which would eliminate the employee wage protection fund. I would point out to you that the employee wage protection fund has nothing to do with any employer or employee in the public sector or the broader public sector. The main theme of the bill is to seek to change the relationships and structures of collective bargaining to facilitate, as the government would argue, a period of transition in the broader public sector due to restructuring and to facilitate collective bargaining during that period. The wage protection fund has absolutely nothing to do with that. There is no relationship in theme or relevancy of theme. It in fact deals with an entirely different sector of the economy, both in terms of the employers and the employees involved.

I would point out to you that the long name of the act does in fact make reference to this section.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Can I have some order here, please. If you have any discussions, if you could take them into the lobbies, I'd appreciate it. I have difficulty hearing the point of order, and it's important that I hear it.

Ms Lankin: The long name of the act does seek to include this provision. I'll read you the title: "Bill 136, An Act to provide for the expeditious resolution of disputes during collective bargaining in certain sectors and to facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector," and then added on to that, "and to make certain amendments to the Employment Standards Act and the Pay Equity Act."

By that standard, if the name of the bill is all that is required to tie things together in terms of the theme and relevancy, you could have a bill "to restructure the public sector and do other stuff in the province of Ontario."

It is clear that the bill before us has included in it, with the provision of the wage protection plan, a legislative initiative which on its own stands independent and apart from and completely irrelevant to the provisions of the main thrust of the bill, which get the most attention in the title as well as in the bill itself, which is "to provide for the expeditious resolution of disputes during collective bargaining...facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector."

I would point out to you that omnibus legislation in and of itself is problematic. First, it means that members of the assembly must exercise their vote in a way which may offend their own principles. Members of the assembly and their constituents may feel one way and very strongly in favour of the general theme —

The Speaker: Look, folks, if you want to have a discussion, you're going to have to leave the chamber. I can't hear the point of order. It's just that simple. Go to the lobbies.

Ms Lankin: The point I was making is that members of the assembly and their constituents may feel very strongly in favour, for example, of the general theme of the legislation but very much opposed to another major initiative which may be contained in the legislation, totally unrelated, as I argue in this case before us.

Second, it means that members of the assembly cannot give adequate consideration to matters that are included in broader legislation. Of course, all the rules that we know which set out times of debate in this assembly — time limits on speeches or the process for time allocation motions, for example — apply to a single bill irrespective of its scope, its size or its complexity. We would think that must be reason to look at, where in fact you have two significant bills, unrelated, combined together, that there is an argument that the rights of individual members are being abridged.

Third, it means that substantial government initiatives do not receive the attention they deserve in terms of public participation. Bill 136 — the point that I am raising with you which I believe is offensive in terms of legislative process and precedent — seeks to eliminate the employee wage protection fund. That fund was created by separate legislation in 1991 through a bill that was exclusively written for that purpose, to create the wage protection fund. That bill was debated at second reading for four days solely on the issue of the creation of the wage protection fund. It was considered by the standing committee on resources development for eight days, solely dealing with the establishment of the wage protection fund. How much opportunity will there be for

debate and public input on its elimination when it is tagged on to and inserted in a bill that deals with much broader, complex and very controversial issues with respect to the restructuring of the entire broader public sector and the collective bargaining relationships that exist within the broader public sector?

Lastly, I want to refer to what parliamentary precedent exists to support a decision to rule this legislation out of order. There is clear precedent which does allow you to split motions. I realize that's different than legislation. This was done in the British House of Commons in 1917, June 6, and in the Canadian House of Commons in 1964, June 15. In both cases, the Speaker ruled that it was unfair to members to compel them to vote on a motion which contained two separate and unrelated matters.

I think the essence of that ruling is important for you to review, because while it deals with motions, and I accede to that point, the argument that members should not be compelled to vote on two separate and entirely unrelated matters forced together for the convenience of government timetabling I think is one that should be taken into consideration as you look to rule on this.

1520

Second, on January 26, 1971, this matter was raised in the House of Commons in relation to Bill C-201, dealing with the reorganization of the government of Canada. It was a large and complex bill, but there was a sense that it all dealt with at least one theme: the reorganization of the government of Canada. At that time, Speaker Lamoureux regretted the fact that he could neither split the bill nor rule it out of order, but this is what he said at that point:

"However, where do we stop? When another omnibus bill is proposed to the House, it should be scrutinized at first reading stage, when honourable members will be given the opportunity of expressing their view and the Chair can express its view either that the bill goes too far or that it is acceptable or unacceptable from a procedural standpoint."

Speaker Lamoureux seems to be inviting at some point in time a Speaker in this Dominion to take the position that a government has gone too far in terms of combining unrelated aspects within one bill and forcing the members of the Legislative Assembly to deal with that, all the rules guiding speeches, time limits etc dealing with legislation, to deal with two entirely separate issues.

Mr Speaker, I'm asking you to follow up on Speaker Lamoureux's suggestion and to express your view about whether this bill goes too far or whether it is acceptable from a procedural standpoint. We recognize that this is a matter you might well need to take under consideration. We have brought it to your attention at the first possible opportunity, having received a copy of the bill on Tuesday afternoon, having reviewed it yesterday and notified you we would be bringing the point of order forward today. We seek to get a ruling before the government calls this bill for second reading so that we could have a ruling from you in a timely fashion.

We ask for a ruling that would suggest that this bill is out of order and that the government, if it seeks to pursue both of these legislative initiatives, would need to reintroduce legislation which splits this bill or their

choice in terms of whether they wish to proceed with one part or another. That is the remedy we seek from you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm going to go to the House leader next, member for Algoma. If the House leader would also help me, your orders of the day are to be announced. I'm only asking you that because of the request from —

Interjection.

The Speaker: It won't be today? Okay, thank you. Government House leader.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): In terms of the orders of the day —

The Speaker: That's okay. I just wanted to know if you were calling this bill which has to do with the concern of the member.

Hon David Johnson: No, that's certainly not the intent. The opposition parties have been asking that we get to the bill pertaining to road safety, and we certainly intend to —

The Speaker: I don't want to get into that. I just wanted that for this particular reason. Go ahead, government House leader.

Hon David Johnson: Just briefly, because I don't intend to go on, it's interesting to have a dissertation about omnibus bills etc, but this bill is clearly in order. It deals with matters which are totally under the purview of the Ministry of Labour.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): There are all sorts of things that —

Hon David Johnson: Sure there are. The Employment Standards Act involves the Ministry of Labour, and the Pay Equity Act. They are all matters that relate to labour: the setting up of the transition commission, the Dispute Resolution Commission.

Mr Speaker, we weren't aware that this was being raised today, but I can recall and I suspect you can recall a few years ago when the former government routinely had any number of bills being impacted by a piece of legislation. I think I can remember some 15 different pieces of legislation or bills or acts, I guess, being affected by one piece of legislation. There's no question about it, that has happened.

All these matters are matters that would generally come under the purview and jurisdiction of the Minister of Labour. There are any number of precedents for this and we'd be happy to pass them along to you if indeed this requires some time to consider the ruling. I would submit to you that this certainly is in order.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I don't intend to prolong this, because we wish to move to orders of the day, but I do want to make a couple of very short comments.

First, the assertions of the government House leader are somewhat bizarre. He seems to be saying that since both of these very separate issues come under the purview of the Ministry of Labour, it should be in order to put them into one bill. There are a lot of other things, like employment standards, occupational health and safety, workers' compensation, all sorts of things that come under the purview of the Ministry of Labour. That doesn't mean they have the same principle and relate to

the issue at hand that is being dealt with by a particular piece of legislation. To combine a lot of things that relate to the Ministry of Labour in one bill is in fact to construct an omnibus bill.

The suggestion also that previous governments have had pieces of legislation that amend many other pieces of legislation is to miss the point. We are not objecting in this point of order to the fact that this piece of legislation may relate to a number of other statutes. We recognize that a piece of legislation dealing with restructuring could, and should perhaps, deal with a number of statutes. What we are objecting to is that the bill includes not just restructuring of the public sector and the statutes related to that, but also the worker protection in bankruptcy, which does not in our view relate to the principle of the bill, which relates to restructuring.

I just would add one other thing. We are working here within the rules and traditions of the British parliamentary system. This is not a congressional system. All of us who have studied this will recognize that in the American system it is quite appropriate to add all sorts of things into legislation —

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Riders.

Mr Wildman: — riders and amendments that have nothing to do with the principle of a particular piece of legislation, and it's quite acceptable in the American Congress to do that. It is not in the British parliamentary system.

As my friend from Beaches-Woodbine indicated, if it is acceptable, and the way you cover it is by the title of the bill, then the government could simply introduce a bill saying in this case, "A bill to deal with all matters that come under the purview of the Ministry of Labour," and that would be acceptable. Obviously it would not.

We are saying here that these two pieces of legislation are distinct and they should be dealt with as distinct bills. If the government wishes to proceed on both, the government should bring in distinct bills. Putting them together is out of order.

The government should not be putting the members of the assembly in the invidious position of perhaps being in favour of the restructuring measures but opposed to the repeal of the worker protection and having to vote one way on both, because they are combined, rather than being able to vote on them separately.

Ms Lankin: The government House leader indicated that there were in the past pieces of legislation which had an impact on a number of statutes. My colleague has refuted that argument and pointed out that that's not central to the point.

I would say, however, that whatever may have happened in the Legislative Assembly before, if it had not been brought to the attention of the Speaker and had not been pushed as an issue and ruled on, it is of minimal value in helping you determine the case before us. I would ask you to look to the rulings that have been made around this and to where we may go in the future, but also argue that the development of omnibus legislation and the use of it in this Legislature is a relatively new thing.

Last, the government House leader argued that there was a relationship in these bills. I would ask you to

review Hansard. Today in this Legislature in question period a question was asked by my leader of the Minister of Labour with respect to the wage protection plan. In fact, if you look you will see that nowhere in her response does she talk about restructuring the public sector, of collective bargaining relationships. She simply talks about the fact that the government had been unable to collect funds from employers to recompense the government for the money that had been put out to the private sector employees and that the government should be looking to get the federal government to change the federal Bankruptcy Act. So I think by her own answer she indicates that there is no relationship.

The last point I would make is that the government has indicated it would be prepared to provide you with precedents. We have put our arguments here today on the record, and I would ask that if the government provides any information outside this assembly, it be provided to all parties and there be an opportunity for us to comment on it.

The Speaker: If the government provides me with the submissions, I will only presume the government supplies those submissions to the opposition. If they don't, they should. I will take this into consideration and report back as soon as is humanly possible.

1530

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe that there is unanimous consent, if unanimous consent is required, with regard to the motion that notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 85.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

PETITIONS

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas on July 15, 1996, the government of Ontario forced seniors with incomes over \$16,018 to pay an annual fee of \$100 on prescription drugs;

"Whereas this user fee imposed significant financial hardships on vulnerable seniors;

"Whereas on April 1, 1997, the government of Ontario unfairly and knowingly forced Ontario seniors to pay that \$100 deductible again;

"Whereas the time between July 15, 1996, and April 1, 1997, is only eight and a half months and not one year;

"Whereas the Ontario government has wrongly taken an additional \$30 million out of the pockets of seniors for prescription drugs;

"Whereas Ontario seniors feel cheated by the government of Ontario and this \$30 million ripoff shows a tremendous disrespect for Ontario seniors;

"Therefore be it resolved that the government of Ontario credit the Ontario seniors for the three and a half months overpayment they were forced to pay on prescription drugs by making the effective date for the 1998 \$100 deductible July 15, 1998, instead of April 1, 1998."

I concur with the petitioners and I affix my signature to it.

GAMBLING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario which has 37 signatures. It deals with a provincial referendum on the expansion of casinos and the installation of electronic gambling devices. I affix my signature.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition here all the way from Sault Ste Marie.

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Rent Control Act protects Ontario's 3.3 million tenants and allows for security and stability in their homes and communities; and

"Whereas lifting rent control in Ontario would leave tenants with uncontrollable rent increases and financial instability; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government is considering changes to the Landlord and Tenant Act favouring easier and faster eviction by landlords;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save rent control."

I affix my signature in total agreement with this.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature to it.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative Party has broken its promise that it would not close hospitals in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Conservative-Reform party said that it would not introduce user fees and proceeded to introduce \$225 million in new user fees for seniors through the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

"Whereas the Reform-Conservative party promised that aid for the disabled would not be cut and proceeded to level millions of dollars in new user fees on the backs of the disabled; and

"Whereas the Reform-Conservative party promised there would no cuts to education and then proceeded to impose cuts which caused the cancellation of junior kindergarten, the cancellation of special education programs and created larger classroom sizes; and

"Whereas the Reform-Conservative party stated there would be no cuts to law enforcement and then cut the budgets of Ontario's police and courts by more than \$100 million; and

"Whereas the Reform-Conservative party promised that there would not be cuts to the environment and has broken this promise by firing environmental inspectors and cutting the budget which protects the environment by over \$100 million;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Reform-Conservative party to cancel the last stage of its tax scheme, which benefits the wealthiest people in Ontario the most, and restore funding for programs which protect health care, education, seniors and the environment."

I gladly sign the petition as well.

NORTHWESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition here to save Northwestern General Hospital.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the 1995 provincial election campaign, Mike Harris promised he would not close hospitals; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris hospital closing commission has ordered the closing of 10 hospitals in Metro Toronto alone; and

"Whereas closing community hospitals like Northwestern General Hospital and creating more costly mega-hospitals will greatly diminish the quality of health care while increasing costs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Mike Harris keep his campaign promise not to close hospitals and keep community hospitals open across Ontario as he promised."

I affix my name to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is proposing to restructure completely the provincial-municipal relationship without having consulted the people of Ontario; and

"This restructuring proposes to download to municipalities the cost of transportation in such critical social services as welfare and long-term care for the elderly and the chronically ill; and

"Remove school boards' ability to tax, eliminating any effective local control of schools and school programs; and

"The government's actions fail to guarantee existing levels of funding and fail to recognize the unequal ability of local communities to bear the cost of these new burdens, thus producing inequitable access to essential services; and

"Whereas the government's lack of meaningful public consultation and disregard for public response poses a serious threat to democracy;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, because we care about the quality of life in our province and the wellbeing of our children, neighbours and communities, register a vote of non-confidence in the government of the province of Ontario."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF NOT-FOR-PROFIT CREDIT COUNSELLING SERVICES ACT, 1997

Mr Crozier moved first reading of Bill Pr82, An Act respecting the Ontario Association of Not-For-Profit Credit Counselling Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

MUNICIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION (ONTARIO) INC. ACT, 1997

Mr Tascona moved first reading of Bill Pr83, An Act respecting the Municipal Law Enforcement Officers' Association (Ontario) Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TENANT PROTECTION ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 SUR LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 96, An Act to Consolidate and Revise the Law with respect to Residential Tenancies / Projet de loi 96, Loi codifiant et révisant le droit de la location à usage d'habitation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 1997, I am now required to put the question. Mr Leach has moved second reading of Bill 96. Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1541 to 1546.

The Acting Speaker: Will the members please take their seats.

Those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized.

Ayes

Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Bassett, Isabel	Hudak, Tim	Saunderson, William
Brown, Jim	Jackson, Cameron	Shea, Derwyn
Carr, Gary	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Carroll, Jack	Kells, Morley	Smith, Bruce
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Leach, Al	Spina, Joseph
DeFaria, Carl	Leadston, Gary L.	Stewart, R. Gary
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Tsubouchi, David H.
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Turnbull, David
Grimmett, Bill	O'Toole, John	Villeneuve, Noble
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Hardeman, Ernie	Palladini, Al	Witmer, Elizabeth
Harnick, Charles	Parker, John L.	Wood, Bob
Harris, Michael D.	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed please rise one at a time and be recognized.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Gerretsen, John	Miclash, Frank
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	North, Peter
Castrilli, Annamarie	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Silipo, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Laughren, Floyd	Wood, Len
Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to an order of the House dated June 2, 1997, this bill is referred to the standing committee on general government.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION REFORM ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 PORTANT RÉFORME DE LA LOI SUR LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 99, An Act to secure the financial stability of the compensation system for injured workers, to promote the prevention of injury and disease in Ontario workplaces and to revise the Workers' Compensation Act and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 99, Loi assurant la stabilité financière du régime d'indemnisation des travailleurs blessés, favorisant la prévention des lésions et des maladies dans les lieux de

travail en Ontario et révisant la Loi sur les accidents du travail et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe that in terms of the vote we have unanimous consent for no bell and for the same vote, recorded, on this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there unanimous consent? It is agreed. It is understood, then, that the doors will remain locked.

Pursuant to an order of the House dated May 29, 1997, I'm required to now put the question.

Mrs Witmer has moved second reading of Bill 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members.

Interjections: Same vote.

The Acting Speaker: The same vote as the last one? Is it agreed?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Recorded.

The Acting Speaker: Recorded.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 29, 1997, this bill is referred to the standing committee on resources development.

ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS IMPROVEMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU PROCESSUS D'AUTORISATION ENVIRONNEMENTALE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 57, An Act to improve the Efficiency of the Environmental Approvals Process and Certain Other Matters / Projet de loi 57, Loi visant à améliorer l'efficacité du processus d'autorisation environnementale et concernant certaines autres questions.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, again I believe we have unanimous consent for no bells and the same vote, recorded.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 3, 1997, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Same vote, recorded.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

COMPREHENSIVE ROAD SAFETY ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997

SUR UN ENSEMBLE COMPLET DE MESURES VISANT LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mr Palladini moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to promote road safety by increasing periods of suspension for Criminal Code convictions, impounding vehicles of suspended drivers, requiring treatment for impaired drivers, raising fines for driving while suspended, impounding critically defective commercial vehicles, creating an absolute liability offence for wheel separations, raising fines for passing stopped school buses, streamlining accident reporting requirements and amending other road safety programs / Projet de loi 138, Loi visant à favoriser la sécurité routière en augmentant les périodes de suspension pour les déclarations de culpabilité découlant du Code criminel, en mettant en fourrière les véhicules de conducteurs faisant l'objet d'une suspension, en exigeant le traitement des conducteurs en état d'ébriété, en augmentant les amendes pour conduite pendant que son permis est suspendu, en mettant en fourrière les véhicules utilitaires comportant des défauts critiques, en créant une infraction entraînant la responsabilité absolue en cas de détachement des roues, en augmentant les amendes pour dépassement d'un autobus scolaire arrêté, en simplifiant les exigences relatives à la déclaration des accidents et en modifiant d'autres programmes de sécurité routière.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Members, if you're making your way from the chamber, please do it as quietly and as quickly as possible.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I believe we have unanimous consent that I will be speaking briefly and then the opposition will split the balance of the time left.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? It is agreed.

Hon Mr Palladini: I would like to once again thank the opposition members for their support for this bill in recognizing the benefits for all Ontarians of a speedy passing at second reading and on to committee hearings. A special thanks to my critic colleagues, Mr Duncan and Mr Bisson, for their support of this bill as well.

I have a lot of ground to cover on this bill, so let me get to the heart of what this bill is really all about, and that's targeting some of the worst offenders on our roads: suspended drivers, drinking drivers, unsafe trucks and drivers who pass stopped buses.

This is more than a start. The start came approximately 18 months ago, with Ontario's road safety plan. We knew there were some issues that had to be addressed, and the road safety plan identified those issues. In fact, the plan went one step farther. It came up with some very real solutions to some very real problems.

This is our third bill in a year. What makes this bill so unique in my eyes is that we have a buy-in not only from the opposition but from the public. We have endorsement from associations and people in general telling us that this is a good day for Ontario. That tells me that everyone agrees we all want — yes, even demand — safer

roads. Best of all, this bill is directed only at those who put others at risk.

We know that drinking and driving do not mix. In 1995, of the 999 fatalities on our roads, alcohol was involved in 352 of these casualties. That's roughly 33%. Sadly, our statistics also show that almost 70% of drinking drivers are repeat offenders. This is not acceptable.

The government already supports community-based RIDE programs. About a year ago I stood here to introduce the administrative driver's licence suspension program. ADLS got its official launch in December of last year and has done what it set out to do: to get drinking drivers off the roads immediately and to keep them off the roads for 90 days. In its first weekend of operation, more than 300 drivers lost their licence immediately for 90 days. In the first six months of operation, over 10,000 people have lost their driver's licence for 90 days. That means they lose their driving privileges for 90 days and can't put anyone at risk.

Ideally, drivers would be responsible. They shouldn't have to be told the first time, let alone a second time, that drinking and driving just don't mix. That's why we are increasing suspension periods for repeat offenders. Second-time offenders will lose their driver's licence for three years, up from two. Third-time offenders will receive a lifetime suspension, with a possible reduction only after a 10-year period on the condition that they successfully complete a remedial program and have ignition interlock installed before their reinstatement. This device is used in Alberta. Just to give you an idea as to how this works, every time a driver gets into the vehicle, he or she must blow into that device. If the driver blows over the preset blood alcohol level, the car just won't start.

A fourth-time offender cannot and will not ever, ever get a driver's licence in this province again. Drinking-and-driving convictions will stay on a driver's record for a minimum of 10 years, up from the current five.

These are by far the toughest laws in North America. Ontario will become the ninth province to introduce a remedial measures program. In future, first-time offenders will be required to attend a mandatory education program. A person convicted of a second offence must undergo an assessment program and attend either an education and/or treatment program.

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We went to the other provinces and asked them what worked for them and gave them significant results. They told us that since introducing remedial measures, there has been a 7% to 9% decrease in alcohol-related crashes and repeat offences. And it's the offender who happens to pick up the tab for these programs, not Ontario taxpayers.

I said up front that this bill addresses some of the worst offenders on our roads. In this case, it's the person who is caught driving while under suspension. In future, before anyone lends out their car to a relative or a friend, they had better make sure that person driving their car has a valid Ontario driver's licence. The same holds true for rental companies. Anyone caught driving while under a Criminal Code suspension will have the vehicle they

are driving impounded roadside for 45 days. Vehicle owners better take note. The second time around, an owner's vehicle will be impounded for 90 days, plus it will be up to the vehicle owner to come up with the money for the towing and impounding charges.

Again, Ontario went to the other provinces and asked them what has worked and been effective in getting this group off the roads. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have told us impoundment does work.

There's still more. These same people who are caught driving while under a Criminal Code suspension will face fines that range from \$5,000 to \$50,000. To put it simply, this sort of behaviour will not be tolerated. People who get caught will receive no sympathy.

Before I move on, let me say we have done more for road safety in the past 18 months than anyone has done in the past 10 years.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Al, will you stop this stuff? Come on.

Hon Mr Palladini: I was here last spring with legislation on truck safety, I was here last fall with even more, and I've worked through Target '97, a joint industry-government group, to not only identify —

Mr Bisson: Point of order.

Hon Mr Palladini: Oh, Gilles, please.

Mr Bisson: Speaker, the Minister makes comments that are not factual, talking about who did what when it comes to road safety. The point I make is simply this: The minister is asking for the cooperation of the opposition parties. The least he can do is try to be cooperative himself and not play partisan politics with this issue.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Minister.

Hon Mr Palladini: Then I do understand, because I have applauded the opposition for recognizing the importance of this bill, but the facts do speak for themselves and this is not a personal, partisan shot. The facts are there. I don't mean to rile the member from Cochrane. I really don't mean to rile you up.

I was here last spring with legislation on truck safety, I was here last fall with even more, and I've worked through Target '97, a joint industry-government group, the first time ever that the government and industry and stakeholders worked together for better safety on Ontario roads. I'm very proud of that fact. We had input from shippers, insurance companies and also our enforcement staff with OPP.

This is National Transportation Week. We are in the final hours of Road Check, a three-day, North-America-wide truck inspection blitz. Last year our enforcement crew conducted the highest number of truck inspections of any group in North America. The industry has had its wake-up call, and as tough as our last two bills have been on unsafe drivers and vehicles in the trucking industry, we've gotten even tougher.

Ontario is taking the lead in Canada in combating unsafe trucks. Trucks that have been pulled off the road for one or more critical defects will find themselves housed at a truck impounding yard for 15 days. If that same vehicle gets caught a second time within a two-year period, it will sit in the impoundment yard for an addi-

tional 30 days. A company that still does not get the message and puts the same vehicle out on the road for a third time had better be prepared to do more time in the impoundment yard, only this time the truck will stay in the yard for 60 days.

I don't want to see yards filled with trucks. That's the last thing that I want. On the contrary, I hope that the impoundment yard stays empty, for that would mean trucking companies are doing regular maintenance checks on their fleet and that is what it is the intent of this bill to create.

It doesn't matter where these trucks come from. This impoundment applies to all unsafe trucks and buses, regardless of where they are from.

It's important to note who will pick up the tab for the impoundment. That will fall on the shoulders of the vehicle owner, and it will be up to the carrier to transfer their load to a safe vehicle. The owner will face fines that can run as high as \$20,000. Owners and carriers can appeal the impoundment order to the Licence Suspension Appeal Board, but strict conditions will apply.

We continue to proceed with legislation that will make wheel separation an absolute liability offence under the Highway Traffic Act. We have kept this bill intact and we're going forward with it word for word. By "absolute liability," we mean that if a wheel comes off while a truck or bus is travelling down a highway, that's all an enforcement officer will need to lay charges against the commercial vehicle owner and/or truck or bus company.

The fines cannot be dismissed as merely the cost of doing business. They start at \$2,000 and they go as high as \$50,000 — the highest, I might add, under the Highway Traffic Act.

This legislation affects trucks weighing more than 4,500 kilograms and buses that are designed for carrying 10 or more passengers. It includes dump trucks, school buses, city buses and intercity motor coaches, just to name a few.

Our approach to truck safety has always been one of consultation, education, enforcement and improved technology. And so that there is no doubt about it, this is directed at the unsafe operators, the ones no one wants to share the road with, especially the majority of truckers who drive safe rigs.

This legislation also targets drivers who continue putting our children's safety at risk. The laws for school bus safety are clear and straightforward. When the overhead red lights start flashing and the stop arm comes out, traffic must stop in both directions. Yet in 1995, 776 drivers were convicted of failing to stop for a school bus.

Passing a stopped school bus is already one of the most serious offences under the Highway Traffic Act, but to ensure the safety of our children, we're going to make it even more serious by doubling the existing fines. First-time offenders will now be fined \$400 to \$2,000, and repeat offenders will be fined \$1,000 to \$4,000.

We are also working together with the Ministry of Education to develop a comprehensive school bus safety information package that will be used to educate the public on the importance of school bus safety. One child lost because someone passed a school bus when they shouldn't is one life too many.

We admit that there is still much more work to be done, but we are well on our way to introducing and implementing measures that will get unsafe drivers and trucks off Ontario roads.

Once again, I want to thank the opposition for their continued support.

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Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Let me begin by reaffirming the official opposition's intent to support the bill, and to begin to discuss in broad terms the bill itself and some issues that aren't addressed in the bill that I think the minister intends to address by regulation, which we'd like to see an opportunity to discuss at greater length and have some public input into.

First of all, the range of the bill, the initiative around drunk driving: We applaud the government on that initiative. We support that. We have been calling for it as well for some time. On the nature of the process — the first offender getting education programs, the repeat offender assessment education treatment — I can tell the minister, as someone who used to administer the largest alcohol and drug recovery program in the country, education and treatment are oftentimes very important. If you catch those people early on, you can hopefully prevent serious mishaps from occurring in the future.

It wasn't long ago in this province when it wasn't uncommon for drunk drivers who killed somebody to get 90 days. Those days are not that long ago. We have gradually, over the course of the last 10 to 15 years, increased the penalties and increased the nature of punishment in view of society's increasing abhorrence of drunk driving.

We concur with the suspension periods and are prepared to support them, and the longer search length, which is something that doesn't get talked about a lot in the media, but we think that too is a positive step forward.

I want to talk about the bus safety aspect. My colleague Pat Hoy, the member for Essex-Kent, could not be here today — he had commitments in his constituency — but I think he deserves a great deal of credit for bringing this issue to the forefront, putting it on the public agenda, getting this Legislature to adopt a private member's bill and keeping the government's toes to the fire. As much as we want to stay away from partisan attacks, I think it's fair to say that in this case, had it not been for the efforts of Mr Hoy and his bill, and I must say the Marcuzzi family who suffered such a tragedy some months ago, this bill may not have come forward, certainly not in as timely a fashion as it has.

I should say to the minister that his bill does not go as far as my colleague's bill does. There are issues we will debate in committee and we will likely put amendments to the bill in those sections and see what the government's view is and why they have not gone that far. We believe our private member's bill, Mr Hoy's bill, would have been a better bill.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would you please ask the clerk to check for a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Duncan: The official opposition's bill on bus safety forced the government to act, and we're glad they've acted. We will take this bill into committee; I believe next week is the agreement. We will spend time discussing it. We will put amendments to make the bill tougher than the government proposes right now, but we are prepared at this point to support that portion of the government's bill.

There is always a difficult balancing act that a Minister of Transportation has to play in terms of the various pressures he or she has put on them. There are oftentimes conflicting interests between trucking companies and road users. Trucking companies have a number of pressures on them in the modern economy: They are dealing in a just-in-time inventory system, we see a deterioration of our road system in Ontario, and we see a need to be competitive with our neighbours in terms of getting goods back and forth between points.

We think the part of road safety the government has to address in a broader context is the condition of our highways in general, overall. Many people across this province have expressed to me their concerns about the condition of our highways. Indeed, recently one of our northern highways was ranked as one of the worst in the country. Highway 69 leading into Sudbury has long been cited as an example of a highway that needs updating. The condition of Highway 401 when you get down southwest of London, between London and the great city of Windsor, my home, has deteriorated seriously.

Our highways are an important component of our infrastructure. We remember the 1950s and 1960s, when new roads were being built to accommodate industrial growth and economic growth, and we look forward to debating further the capital expenditures the ministry will put into roads and other infrastructure to ensure that our economy can remain competitive in the transportation industry.

We were somewhat dismayed, to come back to Bill 125 and the government's truck safety legislation. The minister introduced the bill in good faith, I believe, on February 24. We offered to support it. There were a number of days between the day it was introduced and the day that the filibuster started that this bill could have been dealt with. The minister spoke passionately about his desire to move forward with that bill, and it's regrettable that he didn't move forward with it at the time. We're glad to see those provisions back in this bill and we are happy to lend our support to getting this bill through the House as quickly as possible.

I say to the minister, however, that he is no doubt aware of the debate around the terminology of "absolute liability." We have asked him for the government's legal opinions and they have not been able to provide us with those, under the guise that it's information for cabinet only and could affect the government's ability to prosecute in the future with whatever strategy the government

has. But we have conflicting views and we too have been torn by the advice we've had about how that clause can stick and how strong it will be. I would be interested to hear from the minister, even if it's not in a public forum, if he would be prepared to share privately with us their views on the "absolute liability" provision. Quite frankly, I will say this to the minister, and we've said it before: The legal opinions we've seen have been all over the board and aren't, overall, encouraging in terms of our ability to make that particular clause stick.

It's unfortunate that the minister did not deal with Bill 125 back in February. The minister, whom I believe to be a man of integrity and when he says something he means it, was left in an unfortunate circumstance a couple of weeks ago by the Premier, in my view, and I think we have this bill today because of the pressure the opposition brought to bear on it. We all wanted this legislation done much sooner and we welcome it.

I will be sharing my time today with my colleague from Oakwood, who in the past has done work with the minister and the government in terms of road safety. But I would like to spend some of my time on what is not in this particular bill.

As the minister knows, there were 72 recommendations coming out of Target '97, many of which must be dealt with by regulation. When meeting with ministry officials earlier in the day, they told us and outlined for us what their intention is with respect to a number of the issues that cannot or do not have to be dealt with in legislation, and my colleague in the third party asked for an outline of what has been achieved and what hasn't been done.

The minister will find on the order paper a number of questions in the next couple of days with respect not only to those initiatives in Target '97 that aren't done or contemplated here, but also a number of the recommendations that were contained in the Worona inquiry. We have asked in past meetings for those and have not been provided with them, we've asked in the House and have not been provided with them, so we've chosen to put an order paper question and will be raising those issues in the course of committee hearings.

I believe the Ministry of Transportation estimates will be coming to the estimates committee. We intend to spend some time on those initiatives there as well and look forward to the government defining for us precisely at what point each of the recommendations I've spoken of being implemented have in fact been implemented.

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Regulation: It's hard to tell people in the public and it's hard to explain sometimes the difference between a statute, a law and a regulation. A regulation is a process that is inherently done behind closed doors and is only done or consulted about with whoever the government chooses to consult. That was one of the criticisms we had with the Target '97 process in general. In the private member's bill I introduced, we provided for a monitoring committee of interested citizens and community to serve as an advisory committee to the ministry, to be updated on the progress of implementation not only of this particular bill but also of regulations that would be forthcoming.

We recognize that the minister in many instances has the legislative authority contained in Target '97. It would be in the minister's interest, it would be in the government's interest and it would certainly be in the interest of road safety if there was a mechanism by which a community group could have some input or at least be kept up to date with respect to progress the ministry is making in implementing the changes that are contemplated.

In effect, what we're saying is it's not enough for the government to choose who should be part of these consultations, but rather those consultations ought to be done in a more public fashion and there ought to be opportunity to review the ministry's progress in implementing new regulations and new legislation.

We have been told, for instance, by people in the trucking industry and by some of the minister's own inspectors that the trained wheel installers' regulations are not being enforced at this point in time. We are told about a number of other less significant changes that were brought about earlier and have been discussed at length that are not being implemented. This causes concern not only for the motoring public but also for those who have an interest in these issues beyond the trucking industry.

There are many groups out there — the insurance industry, the Canadian Automobile Association, community groups and others — that do have an interest. I have been surprised in the course of the last couple of months at the number of small groups in communities across the province — some in my own area; I was in the north last week and met with groups that have a real interest in road safety in general and particularly highway and truck safety.

Those organizations have felt somewhat excluded from the process. I believe this minister is the type of minister who would probably welcome that kind of input, so we will put an amendment to the bill that would provide for a committee to review the implementation of not only this bill but the regulation the government intends to bring about.

It is our hope that when the draft regulation is complete, the minister will table it in the House, which is over and above his statutory obligation, but we hope it will be placed so there is ample opportunity for the public to see it prior to its being gazetted. Given the nature of what has happened on our roads and the minister's own commitment to road safety, in our view this would enhance the government's strategy to improve the safety of roads in Ontario.

The truck safety bill is one component of the entire bill, and the official opposition supports all the main clauses in it. I felt the minister reviewed them adequately and described what the government's intentions are. It's important to bear in mind as this proceeds that we be alert to other changing conditions and we study the results of the Road Check '97, for instance, and the other safety initiatives that the government has undertaken.

There are a number of issues the minister does need to address. There are issues, for instance, about the Avion system that the minister's own officials have told us is not working the way the minister expects it to, and I think there's room for improvement.

I raised in the House a couple of weeks ago the issue about the OPP having access to the ministry's computer data. I applauded the minister; I'm given to understand that the day that question was responded to by the minister, the OPP were able to get access to the computers.

Those are the kinds of things that ministers who are busy with legislation, busy in this House and busy having press conferences sometimes don't have the time to follow up on carefully. We hear from the minister's inspectors, we hear from others all the time about some of the shortcomings not in the word of the law or the regulation, but the enforcement of the law and the enforcement of the regulation.

The minister is no doubt aware that within his own ministry a number of his inspectors are concerned about their role and about their place in the delivery of enforcement of the Highway Traffic Act, how that fits in relative to the Ontario Provincial Police and who has appropriate jurisdiction. These issues, while they again are not the sorts of issues that burn the front pages in our headlines, will be important if the minister, as I believe the minister does, ultimately wants to have less deaths on our highways, a general consensus that there are more safe highways. But these sorts of things can get in the way of good law or good public policy, and we believe this is both.

We believe this bill and the regulations that will accompany it, once we've seen them and we can agree, are good public policy. However, as the minister well knows and as anybody who has served at the municipal or provincial or even federal level knows, enforcement is often the most difficult aspect and it is often the thing that challenges not only the public servants but the political leadership. I can tell the minister today that as much as we are pleased to deal with this bill and as much as we look forward to the regulations that will be forthcoming surrounding the bill, we will be vigilant on enforcement, because all the good intentions in the world as expressed in law won't work if the government doesn't commit the resources, both human and otherwise, to ensure the laws that are on our books can be enforced. That is the key.

We believe, particularly in the drunk driving sections, that the minister has addressed in a very clear and definitive way how to improve road safety. I don't think too many people can debate that. We're looking forward to analysing the timing of implementation of the law, the implementation of the regulations, and ultimately we're looking forward to seeing what the minister does to ensure proper enforcement of and compliance with the law. As I say, we will bring one amendment to the bill that calls for a monitoring committee of the public to be set up so that they can be informed of what changes and how the government has gone about implementing its changes right from the regulation through to the enforcement.

This particular bill has been long overdue. I applaud those organizations that participated in Target '97 and I applaud all those in the province who have taken a special interest in this issue, the issue of road safety. There is no doubt that the millions of Ontario motorists and others who use our highways can, in my view, feel safer because of this legislation, and I am proud that the

official opposition had something to do with forcing the government to bring it forward when it did.

In our view, to wait until the fall would have been a mistake, particularly given that the minister has had the Target '97 recommendations for some time and particularly given that the minister has already — and we acknowledge it done — passed other safety measures which improve roads in Ontario. So we are glad to have this bill today and we as the official opposition are glad to be able to assist in giving it speedy passage by the end of this month so that Ontario motorists know that their legislators in all parties feel equally strongly and passionately about the need for road safety, and that where we can act with prudence and with good public policy, we can cooperate and can help make the whole situation better for everybody.

I will be concluding my remarks by talking about several other issues that are related to truck safety. One of them of course is Highway 407 and its imminent opening. The minister has attempted to address some safety concerns he was alerted to by a committee he appointed. I'm given to understand that what the committee found was that it wasn't simply the 407 — the 407 met Ontario standards — but it was necessary to update Ontario's standards with respect to highway construction and highway safety.

We look forward, once 407 is open, to finding out what we can do to all of our highways to improve the condition and design of future roads, because we think this government, probably before the end of this mandate, and certainly the next government that we form in 1999, will be confronted with the need to look at an infrastructure reinvestment in our highways. Our highway system is integral to economic development and growth, and we feel that is an area all of us share in terms of wanting to improve the overall economic climate in this province. We'll be talking more about those issues, because road conditions reflect safety issues.

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I have heard from truckers all across this province that no matter how hard they try to keep up their rigs, if they hit a huge pothole, be it on the 401 or on a secondary road, it's going to cause problems. It could loosen the wheel. There are all kinds of issues around that: narrowness of roadways, changing vehicle styles, weights and axles on trucks. All of these issues are important components of truck safety and road safety in general and need to be addressed in a systematic fashion and need to be reviewed. Again, they need to be reviewed not just by the government and certain special interests, but also by the general public and by other interests, including the insurance industry, the CAA and the general public. So we contemplate an amendment to that effect and hope the minister will give some consideration to it.

I'd also like to alert the minister, as I did his staff and officials this morning, that there was an unfortunate tragedy in my community last week where a young man was killed who had purchased a motorcycle and did not have proper licensing to drive the motorcycle. He was killed immediately after picking up the bike. One of the things that's been suggested by the company that sold that bike to him was that these companies be required,

when somebody buys a bike, to produce a valid operator's licence. I will be asking the minister to give consideration to that. I recognize that a minister can't simply wave his hand and change something, but we will be bringing a private member's bill to that effect and hopefully the minister will consider that. The family has asked for that. It's a terrible tragedy that may not have been averted, but possibly could have been in this case.

I will take my last five minutes to say to the minister, this is good public policy. We are glad that through Mr Hoy's private member's bill and through our private member's bill on truck safety, we were able to keep the fire under your feet and get this bill brought forward. It's regrettable that Bill 125 was introduced and then not dealt with. I think it speaks to the perils of public life: You shouldn't introduce something until you're ready or prepared to proceed.

But we say the job has only begun. The question of enforcement will be front and centre not only for the government but for the opposition. I can tell the minister that we hope the enforcement initiatives that will be necessary to put into effect this legislation and the regulations that will follow this legislation and the commitment to enforcement will be there. The official opposition, the Ontario Liberal Party, will be watching carefully. We will continue to meet with the ministry's safety people. We will continue to meet with the OPP. We will continue to meet with groups and organizations that have a concern.

I would be remiss if I didn't at this time applaud the trucking industry. Many truckers called me when this whole initiative was happening and said they were somewhat concerned because they felt they indeed were good operators and tried their best to keep their rigs clean and in good order and working well. My experience has been that certainly the vast majority of truckers who operate out of this province do that, and it's unfortunate that a few bad actors have that kind of impact on the whole economy. But we applaud this bill.

The minister has spoken about the need for national standards, because the minister knows full well and we know full well that many of the worst rigs on our roads today are not home-based in Ontario. They come from outside of the province. We look forward to helping bring about a change in the national standards. It's our view that we have to address this problem not only in Ontario, but across the border in Quebec, across the border in the United States, where many of the trucks that we've found to have the biggest problems come from or emanate from. We recognize that there is a need to deal with those issues as well, and we will be bringing forward proposals again, as we did on this bill, to help spur that along.

We think there can probably be consensus on a number of issues related to that. I look forward to the minister's continuing commitment to evolving our road safety legislation and regulations to ensure that because we've made some progress today, we don't become blinded to the reality that there are still changes to happen.

In conclusion, we support the bill. We will propose several amendments to the bill which are reflected in our original private members' bills, both my bill and Mr Hoy's bill. We look forward to committee hearings. I know there are a number of people who look forward to

having the opportunity to have a small say in this, I'm sure in some instances to applaud the government. We also look forward to having the opportunity to review the draft regulation, once it's ready, that will give effect to a number of the recommendations that came out of Target '97. It's our hope that the government will commit the resources, number one, to highway rehabilitation, an infrastructure program, if you will, and number two, certainly in the shorter term, to proper enforcement of these laws.

We in this House and those who have served in government at any level and those who live around highways and elsewhere know that if we don't enforce the laws we have, then they're not worth the paper they're written on. That will be a challenge for the government in the coming weeks and months as they grapple with this, as they try to implement the package of amendments we have helped them to design. We look forward to continuing the debate around public safety on our roads and we look forward to having input into the draft regulation. We hope the regulation deals with the balance of recommendations out of Target '97 and the balance of recommendations that came out of the Worona inquest, because there were many recommendations in there that were very positive developments, in our view, and the type of recommendations that can also be implemented without great cost to the government and without great cost or economic inefficiency to the economy in general.

We look forward to finishing second reading debate today, we look forward to getting to public hearings next week and, most importantly, we look forward to this bill being passed by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I want to speak on behalf of all of my colleagues in the official opposition: We are most proud of Mr Hoy's bill on bus safety and we look forward to working with the minister and ensuring that once this bill becomes law and once the regulation is published, the enforcement mechanisms will be there and, most of all, we look forward to safer roads in Ontario.

Mr Bisson: I rise today as the transportation critic on behalf of the NDP caucus to speak to this bill. I want to say up front that we support the general direction, the issues this bill is dealing with, but a little later on I want to talk about what this bill is not dealing with, which concerns me somewhat.

If you remember correctly, when the Minister of Transportation talked about Bill 125 and the wheel separation or flying truck wheel legislation, as we call it, he kept on referring to comprehensive truck policy legislation that would be coming forward to this House. Although this bill does deal with some of those issues, I would say it stops far short of being comprehensive legislation.

I was expecting to see a number of the recommendations from the Target '97 report brought forward into legislation. I understand a lot of that can be done by way of regulation but there's no mention about any kind of timing of how we're going to deal with some of the recommendations of Target '97 and there's no mention in this bill about some of the legislative things that need to happen to make those recommendations work.

But let's speak to the issue at hand. What does the bill do? It does a number of things. There are nine different parts of this bill. I guess, if we put it in the crassest of political terms, the first two deal with truck safety and the rest of them deal with issues of licence suspension and drunk drivers.

Do we need to deal with the issue of drunk driving? Of course. It's a huge problem in our society and I'm glad to see the minister is moving forward and building on work that was previously done not only by his government but by our government and in fact by the David Peterson government before that. Let's deal with that issue first.

One of the things he's doing with this bill is moving to a system where you're going to suspend people's licences once they get caught for drunk driving and every time they get caught there's going to be a longer suspension. On the first conviction, you'll lose your licence for one year, which I think is reasonable. A second conviction will be three years. Where the debate comes in is on the question of the third conviction, which is a lifetime suspension or, if the person can show the Ministry of Transportation that they meet certain criteria — that is, that they've not drunk for a number of years, have been under the care of some program to make sure they've licked their problem with alcohol — there would be other ways to get the person's licence back.

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I want to use a number. I asked today, at a briefing we had with the Ministry of Transportation, how many drivers in Ontario got caught this year for the third time. I'll give people three guesses. The number is downright scary. It's not 1,000, it's not 2,000, it's not 3,000; 4,000 people per year are caught on their third offence of drinking and driving. That's really alarming. I'm the transportation critic, and I always knew it was somewhat high, but the number of 4,000 really demonstrates the seriousness of this issue. Lives are at risk on our highways because people are being irresponsible with their privilege of driving and taking their cars out under the influence of alcohol.

I applaud the minister. In this case, the minister is saying that is not acceptable in our society. If you're going to drive, it is not a right, it's a privilege, and if it's a privilege, that means you have to take responsibility. If you abuse that responsibility, there is a consequence. There are not only higher fines, which we have dealt with in this House before, but there is also the issue of licence suspension. In the event that you do it a number of times — in this case, three times — you will lose your licence for life. That's a pretty severe penalty. I think it sends a fairly straight message to the public that drinking and driving are not accepted in our society and that if you're going to drink and drive, you shouldn't have the right to drive at all. You might be having fun behind the wheel, but you're putting in jeopardy the life of somebody on the highway or a pedestrian who may get run over because of your irresponsibility of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

For that I give the minister some credit. This is long overdue, something that needed to be dealt with, and it's certainly a step in the right direction. I won't argue that

it's too much, that it's not enough, that it's too late. I won't make any of those arguments. It's done, it's a step in the right direction, and I give you full credit for that, Minister.

The other thing it does is that it changes the statutes. In the past, you were able to go back in people's driving records only three years, I think; I'm just going on memory of what I read in the statutes. In this case we're saying that if you get caught drinking and driving, the minister or the OPP will have the ability to go back into your driving record for 10 years. If you've been caught once within those 10 years, you would fall under this particular bill.

That's a good thing, because we can't look at this as being a problem that's been going on for just three years. If people are drinking and driving repeatedly, they've probably done this for quite a few years. We need to give the Ontario Provincial Police and municipal police forces the ability to go back in somebody's driving record for a long enough time to find out if there have indeed been other occurrences. I think that's a step in the right direction.

Another thing the House will be dealing with in this bill is the issue of increased fines for people who had their licence suspended either under a non-Criminal Code-related offence or a Criminal Code-related offence. Just so people understand what we're talking about in plain English, a Criminal Code-related suspension is like drinking and driving. Not only will you lose your licence, but you will pay a higher fine, and I think that's fine. I come back to the first point: Driving is not a right, it's a privilege, and you need to deal with it that way and you need to take responsibility.

Where people have lost their licence for a non-Criminal Code-related suspension — for example, that you haven't paid your fines, haven't paid your parking tickets, those kinds of things — and your licence has been suspended, there will be increased fines. Again that's a step in the right direction and I give the minister credit for that yet again. We're in the habit, with this bill, of saying some nice things; I'll get to the bad ones later. I don't want you, Minister, to think you're doing everything right, because that is certainly not the case.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): He's smiling like the Cheshire cat over there.

Mr Bisson: Exactly.

What we're trying to do here is deal with a long-standing problem, which is that there are people who feel they can get away with not paying their fines. The minister is saying that clearly is not acceptable, and if you do so, not only will you have to pay your fine but you will have to pay an increased fine for having driven while under suspension for a non-Criminal Code suspension. Again I give the minister some credit. That's a particularly good and useful step forward.

Another issue is the whole question of impounding vehicles. If somebody has their licence suspended, the crown will have the ability, or the police in this case, to impound the vehicle.

I raise one caveat, Minister, and I raised this with your political staff this morning and with the ministry staff. I hope we clarify this. I want to read from the minister's

own briefing note, where it says that all vehicles subject to roadside impoundment, regardless of whether the driver owns the vehicle or not, will be impounded; for example, a rental car, if I lend my car to my neighbour, those kinds of situations. Here are the grounds to appeal so that you don't have your car impounded. If the vehicle was stolen, clearly you shouldn't keep somebody responsible on the basis that my vehicle was stolen and the person who stole it was driving while under suspension.

I'm not going to go through all the points. The point I want to get at here is the ministry was not able to clarify for me, in any kind of way that I'd feel comfortable, about situations where the neighbour comes and says: "Gilles, can I borrow your truck? I've got to bring some garbage to the dump." As far as I know, the person probably has their licence because I see them driving their car. How do I know they don't have a licence?

Hon Mr Palladini: You ask him.

Mr Bisson: I was coming to that. The minister said, "You ask him." Not in all cases would we ask.

Mr Wildman: I'd certainly ask Al.

Mr Bisson: Listen, Minister, if you tried to borrow my car, not only would I ask you for your licence, I'd ask for your Rolodex watch just to make sure you can cover the gas.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The Rolex watch, excuse me, because I'd have to assure myself you can pay for the gas. I can tell you, if ever I push you out of my car — never mind. I won't go down that —

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I was going to make a comparison to the fellow who was flying in a helicopter; it was over Bre-X. I won't get into that one; it's not in good taste.

Anyway, the point I want to make to the minister is, I understand it is my responsibility as the owner of the vehicle to say, "Do you have a driver's licence?" but there are cases where people have forged licences. I've seen that in my constituency office where people were driving under suspension and they had forged a licence and then they got in trouble for that, and I ended up dealing with that constituent over such a matter because there were problems with the insurance for having lent the car.

All I'm saying is I don't want the rules so stringent that I have to know exactly when a real driver's licence is actually in order, because some of the forgeries are actually pretty good. Sometimes you won't even know it if it's a person you know but haven't known for a number of years, maybe operating under a different name. All I'm saying is let's not make the law so tight that it doesn't allow for those special circumstances to be dealt with; forged licences and such, that's what I'm talking about. There are people who drive while under suspension and one of the ways they get around it is they have a forged licence. How would I know, if it looks legit? I just don't want to be penalized if that kind of situation was to arise and that person was to have my vehicle and get it impounded and I took the time to look at the licence and the licence was a fraudulent one.

The other issue the legislation deals with is school bus safety. I'll be political here on this point: He's basically

enacting Pat Hoy's bill. The member for Essex-Kent put forward a bill in this House at private members' hour that deals with increasing fines for people who decide to pass school buses when the lights are flashing. I always thought that in this House we had a certain amount of civility, that if a private member comes forward with a bill and it's a bill that could be supported by the House on all sides, we give the member the opportunity and the credit for the work that's been done. In this particular case the minister, for whatever reason, would not call forward the member for Essex-Kent's bill to the committee to be dealt with. I always felt the reason he never did that was because he himself wanted to take the credit for something which I think was a good issue.

I say to the Minister of Transportation, you have the right as the minister to call whatever legislation or draft whatever legislation you want, but I think as an honourable member you also have the responsibility to be somewhat fair-minded when it comes to dealing with private members in this House. Clearly the member for Essex-Kent had put forward what I think was a good bill, a bill that was well thought out and one that tried to address some issues. I think we, and especially the minister because he's responsible in the end, should have given the member for Essex-Kent the ability to have his private member's bill passed in this House.

Instead, the minister decides: "Never mind. I'm not going to call the member for Essex-Kent's bill. I'm going to put in my own and I'll take the credit for it." I'm sorry; that doesn't go over with me and I think it probably doesn't go over very well with a lot of people in the public because we're supposed to be honourable members in this House.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I think the point is that they should have had a joint press release or a joint conference of some type, announcing the bill together if it was going to be a government bill, or at the very least let his bill stand. I don't think that was fair to the member for Essex-Kent. The point I want to make is that not only is this underhanded, in my view, I think it undermines the ability of members to get things done in this House at private members' hour.

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We're all elected in our constituencies to come to this place and to represent our ridings. As well as representing our ridings, we're supposed to represent larger constituencies within the province. If I'm the transportation critic, I'm also responsible for advocating on behalf of those people who have an interest in transportation. In this particular case, the member for Essex-Kent brought forward a sound bill, and the minister usurping away the ability of the member to have his bill passed by doing it himself I think sends a funny message: "What's the point of bringing forward private members' bills?" I think we should allow members to have credit where credit is due.

I say in seriousness that when we were the government, a number of private bills came forward from your own party, the then third party, and never did our government try to do that. I remember one case in particular. Dianne Cunningham, the member for London Centre, I think it is —

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): North.

Mr Bisson: I'm sorry about that. The member for London North brought forward a bill having to do with bicycle helmets, and we as a government could have done the same kind of thing, because in the end that was a good bill and it served the purpose. We didn't say, "We're going to let this bill die on the order paper and we'll bring it back ourselves." I think a government has to respond and recognize that when an individual member has a good bill, we should allow it to go through the private members' process so that the bill is actually enacted. If we don't respect that as members, I think we're making a sham of the process of private members' hour, and I think private members' hour is an important function of this Legislature.

The other part of this bill is the whole issue of school bus safety.

Another thing: There's some clarification of the motor vehicle collision reporting requirements. It's a minor part of the bill that says if you've seen an accident, you have the responsibility to report it, and if you don't, you get fined. I think that is a step in the right direction, because what he's trying to do here is to make sure that if people see accidents, they report those accidents so we can deal with the investigation in a sound manner.

Now we go on to truck safety, and this is what this bill is supposed to be about. If you'll notice, out of the items I've dealt with, only two, and I haven't gone to them yet, deal with truck safety. That's the point I started with at the beginning of this debate.

The minister, with great fanfare, over a period of months kept on talking about how he was going to be tough and how he was going to deal with the issue of flying truck wheels. Then the minister came into this House back in January and introduced a bill knowing full well that the bill would never be called forward. He tabled Bill 125 without the express permission of his own House leader. When he brought the bill in, he said, "I want speedy passage of this bill; let's get it through the House real quick," and then promptly took holidays and left this place. He was very good at doing press conferences and photo ops and very good at trying to respond politically to something that is a serious issue out in our community, namely, the separation of truck wheels, wheels flying off huge trucks. Then he played this game of cat and mouse for the next two months, trying to blame the opposition for stopping the legislation from coming through.

I want to say for the record that the House leader for the NDP, Bud Wildman, and the House leader for the Liberal Party repeatedly raised that issue with the government House leader, trying to get that bill called forward, and the government would not call it forward. I stood in this House on at least six occasions that I can remember asking for unanimous consent to deal with that bill then and there, at the moment, second and third reading on the same day if the government was serious about calling it. Never did they call it. They never allowed unanimous consent to happen. Here we are today and the government

comes back and introduces Bill 125, which is supposed to be comprehensive truck safety legislation, and it's not that.

The point I make here is that the minister never had any intention of passing that legislation last winter. What he did was introduce the legislation to try to respond to what was a political outcry out there from the families and victims of incidents of flying truck wheels. He tried to escape the political consequences of not doing anything. The government at the time was busy dealing with what they considered to be more important legislation, such as merging the cities of Toronto, Scarborough and others into one megacity, such as merging all the school boards in Ontario, dealing with all the effects of their mega-week. They were busy cutting and slashing and the government didn't have time to deal with the issue of truck safety. That's what it was all about.

When we pressured the government and we kept on asking — myself as the NDP transportation critic — for unanimous consent to pass this bill, it put some pressure on the government to try to find some way out of it, what did we get? We got yet again what I think is a bit of a political response to a serious issue out in the motoring public's mind: The government basically has come back with two parts of the truck safety issue.

The reality is that the problem of truck safety is much more complex than just what this bill can deal with. All you're doing in this bill, when it comes to truck safety, is re-enacting Bill 125. The second point you're dealing with is the issue of vehicle impoundment when it comes to somebody found with an infraction. Those are but two issues. There are a whole bunch of other issues that have to be dealt with if we're going to make our highways safe and if we're going to assure ourselves that trucks on our highways and the trucking industry are made more safe. This ain't going to do it.

The reality is that it's a step in the right direction, however, and we'll vote in support of it because it's at least a measure that something is moving forward, and for that we give the minister some credit, but it stops short. It doesn't deal with the issue of truck safety.

If you're going to try to make our highways safe — let's back up even before that. What's the basic problem we're having out there? We have more and more trucks on Ontario highways. Why? Because we have a deregulated trucking industry now and we have less reliance on freight train services. Most of it is now going on the highways. With an increase in trucks on the highways, we have a higher incidence of accidents involving trucks.

The other thing we have going on within the industry is the whole economic side of what's contributing to this problem. What's happening is that we have cut-rate operators, normally smaller ones — not always — who are trying to undercut the cost of being able to transport freight from point A to be point B and driving the price of shipping down. For the shipper, that's a great thing. Persons who are trying to ship components of some type from point A to point B are the winners because they get it done cheaper, but what ends up happening is that the economics make it very difficult for truck companies to do the kinds of things they have to do to make their trucks safe.

If you talk to reputable operators out there like Manitoulin and Northwind and other companies trying to do their jobs, they're spending in some cases millions of dollars in trying to make their trucks safe and are having to compete with cut-rate operators who are not doing the same kind of work, who are taking chances and going out on highways with unsafe trucks, are at times forcing the drivers to drive trucks that are unsafe. Also, they can cut a price to get the contract at the lowest possible price.

If you're ever going to deal with truck safety, you've got to deal with that issue. It's all economics, and you on the government side probably know that better than anybody, at least you say you do. But you can't deal with truck safety, in my view, by just trying to slap higher fines on people. All that's akin to is trying to close the barn door when the horse has bolted out. If you're going to deal with it, you've got to deal with the problem at the very beginning.

I'm not a big advocate of fines. We're going to support the legislation, as I say, because it is going to do something, but I personally am not an advocate of larger fines. I'm not convinced that the idea that somebody is going to get a higher fine is going to make them make their truck safer. They're still going to take a chance and go down the highway with trucks that are unsafe in some cases. Why? Because of the economics.

I talk to trucking operators in my community, in Timmins, Iroquois Falls or Matheson, and they're having a hard time trying to make a buck. That's the issue. When you can't make a buck, what do you do? You cut corners as best you can. The owner-operators of the trucks or companies don't want to put the motoring public at risk, but that's the effect because they're having to compete against other operators who are cutting prices to get contracts.

I don't argue that we regulate the fee structures of the trucking industry. I think we've gone past that point, but I think we have to come at this from a comprehensive position. We have to say that if we're going to make our highways safe and if we're going to make sure that the industry, namely the trucking industry, is as safe as is humanly possible, we all have a stake in making that happen. Government has a stake, because we can regulate to a certain extent a number of the issues. The trucking industry itself has a responsibility, the drivers have a responsibility, the mechanics who inspect and fix the trucks have a responsibility and the shippers have a responsibility. Unless we come at it from the perspective of trying to make sure that everybody — that we change the culture in the trucking industry so that everybody takes responsibility, I don't think we're going to be able to solve this problem.

Really think about it, Minister. You own a trucking company and you're having a tough month or a tough year. It's like: "If I don't get this contract shipping these goods, I'm not going to have the cash flow to keep my company going, so I'll cut my prices somewhat and I'll do the best I can on the maintenance in order to try and make a buck. Maybe things will be better down the road and I'll be able to do the things I've got to do. I'll take a chance that maybe I'll get that fine. Maybe I'll get off or maybe it won't stand up in court." That's the problem with this kind of stuff.

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What you're better off to do is set the economics straight for the industry at the beginning. Again, I'm not arguing that we regulate the costs, how much they should charge their customers, but I think we need to make sure we weed out by economic and regulatory means those operators who are the problems in the industry. How do you, if you're Northwind Transport or Manitoulin or whoever it might be, compete with somebody who owns a couple of trucks, or in some cases even more than a couple of trucks, because some of these guys have as many as 50 trucks?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I'm not saying it won't help at all. That's not the point I'm making, Minister. I'm saying, imagine you're the large shipping company, you're the trucking company, and you're having to compete head to head on a route from Windsor to Oshawa, transporting automotive parts, with some guy who has 50 trucks and says, "I'm going to slash the price because I'm trying to get in on this particular market." There are only so many places you can cut costs. You know as well as I do what ends up happening. Maintenance is one of those costs that end up getting cut.

All I'm saying is we need to come at this from a different perspective. I would argue we have to change first of all the attitude within and outside the trucking industry when it comes to trucking. I think that's one of the things we have to do, and I'll speak about that in a little bit more detail.

The other thing that I think is equally important is that these trucks are not big cars. That's the problem with what we're doing here: We're looking at 18-wheel trucks that weigh over 110,000 tonnes loaded and we're saying we're going to treat them just like they were big cars. They're not big cars; they are shipping vehicles. We need to be able to set up the conditions in such a way, both by way of regulation and of law, as to make sure the responsibilities must be taken by all the stakeholders within the industry — not just the owners, not just the operators, but all people involved in trucking.

How do you do that? I think it's a comprehensive approach that's needed. I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I think if we were to take our time and try to do this job right, we'd be able to get to a lot of these problems. One of the things we can do at the very beginning is say to the people who use trucks to ship goods, "We want you shipping on reputable operators." If you have an un reputable operator who's out there doing something wrong and gets fined, maybe you should make the shipper, as part of the responsibility, pay that fine. Maybe that's what you have to do.

Hon Mr Palladini: I'm looking at that.

Mr Bisson: The minister says he's looking at that. Why is it not in this legislation? Why don't we take that approach? A big part of the problem is the people who use the trucks. You can't just penalize the truck operators and the truck owners.

In my view, you have to go at the people who use them and say: "Listen, if you're going to use reputable operators who do their job well and do it effectively, efficiently and safely, you're going to be fine, but if you

want to take your chance and roll the dice, as Brian Mulroney used to say, and use a cut-rate operator and that cut-rate operator gets into an accident that causes injury or death, you're going to be partly responsible." Maybe that's what you have to do. I don't think you can leave the shipper completely out of the picture.

The other thing we can do is take a look at the whole issue of the trucking companies themselves and the people who inspect trucks, making sure that is done properly. You know as well as I do that if you really want to in Ontario you can go to a person who has an inspection garage, who has a class A mechanic's licence, who is in the business of inspecting trucks, and if you get a shady one, you can get what's called a lick-and-stick, where you give the mechanic a number of dollars and they give you a sticker that you can throw on your trailer or truck to say that it has been inspected, when it has not been inspected.

We need to get at that problem. That's how a lot of these illegal trucks, in my view, end up on the road. What's happening is that the owner or the operator — the owner in this particular case — says: "It's going to cost me too much money to get this thing up to standard. I've got cut-rate prices because I'm undercutting one of the majors. I'm going to get myself one of these lick-and-sticks, as they call them in the industry, for \$300, \$400, \$500, and I'll be down driving on the road. If I get caught it's part of the cost of doing business. Maybe I won't." I think that's one of the things we need to do: We need to properly regulate who is able to do work on trucks, who can inspect trucks, and to make sure that they're doing their job properly.

I think it's an internal responsibility system. Again I'd say that a lot of the major operators out there, the bigger ones and even some of the smaller ones — I remember Mr Metsala in Timmins who had a trucking company. He took great care in making sure that his three trucks were always in great shape. But what I'm saying is that we need to make sure that the mechanics who are working on trucks are certified and we have to make sure that the work that they're doing is up to standard and proper inspections are being done.

The other thing we need to do is possibly look at increasing the frequency of inspections for trucks. Part of the problem now is by law we only have to inspect them once per year. Is that enough? I say no. The minute that you drive the truck down the highway the wear and tear starts. I think the amount of miles that are put on these trucks and the speed and the condition of the highways that we have add to these trucks going out of shape and eventually, within a fairly short period of time after they've been inspected for that yearly inspection, there might be something wrong with them. Maybe what we need to do is increase the inspections.

I was talking to — I forget the gentleman's name — the president of one of the trucking companies in Oshawa. He said it's only good business for them to inspect their trucks on a more frequent basis, because if they're able to catch a problem up front early on it saves them money in maintenance costs or in costs of reparation for the vehicles. So I don't think it would be a great onerous cost to the trucking industry. In fact it probably

would help them. It would help them weed out some of those disreputable truck operators who are out there undercutting the prices and making it difficult for the reputable operators. I think that's one of the things you can do.

The other thing we can be looking at is the issue of the drivers themselves, making sure that drivers are properly trained. For the most part, most of our drivers are pretty reputable people. But we have some schools out there that are putting drivers out, in my view, talking to the people in the industry, talking to the truckers, that they're pretty fearful of. You get, as they call them in the industry, some jockey behind the wheel who's only just now got his licence and the person's doing long-haul somewhere.

Maybe we need to look at a couple of issues. Maybe we need to look at how we license drivers in the first place. Maybe we should say, "Let's recognize that driving is a profession." It's not as simple as getting behind the wheel and stepping on the gas and going down the highway. There are all kinds of things you need to know to be a good driver. You have to understand your vehicle, and our vehicles are much more complex today than they were 20 years ago. You have to understand the rules of the road. You have to understand how to react under certain conditions with your vehicle. What do you do if you're on ice with a 110,000-pound vehicle? What do you do if you're out in the rain and this condition happens? You also have to know some basic mechanics to be able to properly inspect your truck.

Maybe one of the things we should be moving to is a mandatory licensed program of some type by which we license our drivers, and then when we do give them their licences, maybe we should move to a graduated driver's licence system for truck drivers, such as we did with the driver of a car. It's ludicrous — think about it — that in Ontario it takes longer to get your driver's licence to drive the family car than it does to drive a truck.

Maybe we should be looking at extending the graduated driver's licence system that our government, the NDP government, had put in place for private cars and people with normal class-G licences to trucks, so that when they do come out of their driving school that has been properly done, they don't graduate all of a sudden to long-haul. Maybe at first they've got to drive with another driver, and after a while they're only allowed to drive on the shorter hauls and eventually graduate to being able to drive the longer hauls.

We need to make sure that the drivers are properly trained when it comes to inspection. Not in all cases do the drivers know what to look for. Most do, the guys or the women who have been around for a while, but we need to make sure that they understand how to do a proper inspection of their vehicle.

One of the other things that we've got to do, in my view, and I know this would be controversial from the government's perspective, but we've got to give truck drivers the right to refuse unsafe work. The logic of this stuff boggles the mind. If you work in an underground environment, if you work in a mine, if you work in a car factory, if you work in a retail store somewhere, you can refuse unsafe work and you have the protection of the

Occupational Health and Safety Act to make sure that your employer doesn't have any reprisals against you for refusing unsafe work. But in the trucking industry we don't consider the truck the workplace, so the Occupational Health and Safety Act does not apply to trucks. Hence, truck drivers can't refuse unsafe work.

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Never mind myself. How many times have you as members been out there talking to people in the trucking industry where a trucker will come up to you and say, "Listen, I don't want to drive that unsafe truck, but my employer says if I don't do it I'm going to be kicking stones down the road, I'm going to lose my job; all I know is that I've got to pay the bills at the end of the month, I've got a mortgage, I've got a family to support, I've got a kid in college, my daughter needs braces," or whatever it might be? They can't afford it. It's the economics of what happens to working people.

One of the things we need to do is give the truck drivers the same rights as every other worker in the province of Ontario, to say that if there is an unsafe truck you can refuse to drive it and that the employer cannot threaten you in any kind of way, shape or form to prevent you refusing to work.

I think if you did that it would clean up a lot of the industry, because in talking to most drivers out there, I know they see themselves as what they are, professional truck drivers. They're tired of always being the ones blamed every time something happens. In many cases, it's because they've been forced or put into a position they really don't want to be in.

I think we should take a look at redefining the Occupational Health and Safety Act in such a way that gives the truck driver the ability to refuse work. All we'd have to do there is to say the truck is considered a workplace, and that would be it. That little amendment in this bill would not solve the problem but would certainly go a long way to being able to deal with this particular issue.

But again, for whatever reason, the Minister of Transportation doesn't include this kind of stuff in his legislation. Instead what does he do? He comes back with the penalties if you do something wrong. I think we need to look at more than just the penalties; we need to look at the problem.

It just amazes me because this government says: "We're the commonsense government. We're the Common Sense Revolution. We do everything that's common sense." There's no common sense in what we're doing here. I'll bet every government member out there, right now that if it was the Bob Rae NDP government that came forward with these two items, you would be out there chastising us from pillar to post. You would be sitting there saying: "Oh, the NDP government, look at that, all they want to do is fine people. They don't want to deal with the issue." But the minute you get into government what do you do? This is the stuff you do.

I'm saying it might deal with some of the problem but it only scrapes the surface. We need to look at the problem. We need to get at the root of it. One of the things we have to do is try to change the culture within the trucking industry.

I'll give you a good example. Some years ago it was recognized in Ontario that there were a lot of unsafe situations when it came to industrial chemicals within the workplace. There was improper labelling of chemicals in the workplace. There was improper training about how to deal with chemicals as far as transportation and moving them around was concerned. There wasn't sufficient explanation of how to deal with it if you got exposed to some chemical in a mill or a factory somewhere. Do you shower under water? Do you need a special kind of foam? Do you drink milk if you swallowed it? All of those kinds of things.

What happened was, as a lot of people were getting hurt and killed in workplaces because of what was happening around the lack of knowledge about how to deal with chemicals within the workplace, along came a program called WHMIS. What WHMIS did was take the approach of saying: "Let's not fine the employer for having not told an employee about how to properly deal with the equipment or deal with the chemical. Let's make sure that we explain to people what it is they're handling, make sure that workers are properly trained in understanding hazardous chemicals and materials. Let's make sure that the employer takes the responsibility and understands and is trained about how to deal with it. Let's make sure that the ministry is properly able to respond to issues within the workplace."

Over a period of about three or four years there was extensive training done, from about 1986-87 on, where we started doing what we called WHMIS training within the workplace. If you look at the records now, the stats speak for themselves. You have today far less incidence of workers and people within industry being hurt or killed because of being exposed to some chemical. Why? Because we took the time to train people, we took the time to say everybody has a responsibility. It's not just the employer, but the employee as well and others. It's the shipper of the goods. It's the seller of the goods. It's the company that's using it. It's the workers. All of us have a responsibility.

I think that's a better way to go. We need to make sure that we all take responsibility, and maybe within the trucking industry what we need to do is do a similar kind of thing where we try to change that attitude within the industry itself.

I would just say another thing to the trucking industry. It always amazes me how sometimes certain industries don't take the time to try to toot their own horn, to present things in the proper light.

I come from a mining community, the city of Timmins, and you'll wonder why I'm saying this, but it'll become clear. For years you'd go to school, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and if you didn't do well the teachers would say to you, "You're going to end up working in the mines just like your dad." They were trying to make out that mining was a bad thing, and the industry did nothing about that. They didn't do anything to try to enhance the image of working in the mines. I say, what's wrong with working in the mines? It's a great living. It's a highly technical skill, a highly interesting job that's extremely well paying. It's gotten a lot safer over the years. There's nothing wrong with it. But when

did people start seeing it like that? When the industry started saying: "Hang on a second. We're giving ourselves a bad rep because we're not out there promoting ourselves and telling people what we do and how well we do it."

I think the trucking industry and truck drivers need to come together to explain to the motoring public what the trucking industry is all about, explain its worth to our economy, explain what they do well and also admit what they don't do well and try to move forward in addressing some of those issues, so that we're working at this problem not just trying to penalize the trucking industry but trying to deal with it as a community of interest, which in this case is the motoring public. I think this bill really stops short of dealing with the issue overall.

Madam Speaker, I believe there's not a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is present, Speaker.

Mr Bisson: I could have sworn there weren't 20 members here.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: It's nice to see that members of the government side are listening. I've always noticed that. I don't know if I should take it as flattering or the other way around, but I notice that members of the government listen intently when I speak on bills, and for that I thank you. It shows that the people of Cochrane South are getting their money's worth when my paycheck is paid.

The other couple of issues I'd like to raise in the time that's left are the stuff that I think the bill doesn't deal with.

Let me back up. There's just one other thing before I get off what I was saying. The minister started a consultation process about a year or a little more than a year ago. He brought together the Ministry of Transportation folks with the people in the Ontario Trucking Association, the trucking industry, and he formed this thing called Target '97. The industry and the Ministry of Transportation did some good work in coming together and looking at the issues that are causing unsafe trucks and accidents on our roads and what we can do from a comprehensive standpoint to deal with this.

The committee came back and made a number of recommendations, some 79 of them, that the government can deal with. I have two things to say. First of all, where are the 79 things recommended under Target '97? All I see here when I count them is one, two: Two things are being dealt with from the recommendations of Target '97. Why did the government go through this long, expensive consultation process if they didn't have the intention of following through on the recommendations of Target '97?

I've had the opportunity to talk to a lot of people in the industry and a lot of people within the Ministry of Transportation who are not entirely happy with what's in Target '97 but certainly saw it as addressing a number of the key issues to make trucks safer on our highways. Where are they? What I'm told today is, "Don't worry, we're going to deal with this by way of regulation." Well, excuse me, by way of regulation? Do you know

what that means? It means the government is going to present this bill, which they've done today, that we're going to give it passage within the next week or two, and then the government's going to say: "We're off the hook. We don't have to deal with anything else. We passed this bill."

I'm sorry. The problem is not going to go away. Quite frankly, I don't trust this government to deal with this stuff by way of regulation, because this government does not have a very good track record. Why would this stuff be done behind closed doors? For people who are watching back home to understand, there are two ways the government can deal with an issue: You can pass a law, as we're doing now, which means there is public debate, there's public accountability, you the public are able to come before a committee to speak to the bill, to make recommendations or criticize or say that this is good work. Then there is that accountability process which makes the bill a little bit better. Then we finally pass what in the end is a better bill. Why? Because the public is involved.

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This government is saying the 79 recommendations under Target '97 will be passed by way of regulation. What's the difference in doing it through regulation? It means it's done by the cabinet. It's done behind closed doors. The public doesn't have access to the cabinet room. Only the cabinet minister does. Parliamentary assistants and government backbench members or opposition members can't get to the cabinet room, so why do it there? We should have some sort of public process so that those people involved in the industry and the public have an opportunity to take a look at it. In fact, if you look at the whole process of Target '97, it was as fairly exclusive group that dealt with it.

I have a list of people who presented to the Target '97 group. I look at this list of some 20 organizations and individuals. Do I see the public here? Is there anybody from the public on this list? No. Where was CRASH? That's one of the only groups advocating out there on behalf of the motoring public to make our highways safer by increasing truck safety. They weren't invited. In fact, I asked the question in the House one day and the minister responded something along the lines of, "They don't have anything constructive to say."

I'm sorry, Minister, nobody gave you the power to hide behind cabinet doors to do all this stuff. You have a responsibility to the public. It means you've got to deal with organizations like CRASH and you've got to deal with other organizations or individuals who have something to say. It only makes the process better.

I say to the government, your process of Target '97 did create, however, because industry was there with the ministry, some good, positive recommendations. I think it was inherently flawed because you did not have the public as part of the process. You can't do this stuff in isolation. I believe what's happening with this bill is that the government is saying: "We have a political problem. The public has caught on that there are mega-problems within the trucking industry" for the reasons I said a little while ago. "We, the government of Mike Harris, and I,

the Minister of Transportation, Al Palladini, have to be seen as doing something to address the problem."

So what did they do? They announced a committee, Target '97. They went out behind closed doors. We can't even get the minutes of the meetings they had from discussing the issues; they're saying they're not available to the public. Then they made a bunch of recommendations. Great fanfare. Actually, the minister was a little bit surprised by the recommendations, but we won't talk about that because I don't want you getting into trouble with the OTA here. Basically, the recommendations were brought forward. I notice you're smiling there. I'd be smiling too if I were you.

Hon Mr Palladini: I don't think David Bradley is smiling.

Mr Bisson: Maybe not.

The point I'm getting at is that Target '97 came forward. It was done behind closed doors. The public didn't have an opportunity to make any kind of representation to that committee, to be part of the committee, to be part of the process to make it stronger. Instead, you made a great fanfare, announced the recommendations of Target '97 and then, because of public pressure you brought in Bill 125 but wouldn't call the bill forward because you knew the government House leader didn't give you the support you needed to pass the bill because your government was busy dealing with other more important issues such as mega-week.

I remember I asked the questions of the minister a couple of weeks ago and he said: "Oh, don't worry. I'm coming forward with comprehensive truck safety policy. We're going to deal with all of those issues." I'm sorry, the only thing you're dealing with when it comes to truck safety is Bill 125. You're dealing with the absolute liability offences for wheel separations — as I call them, flying truck wheels — and you're dealing with the issue of commercial vehicle impoundment. That's all you're dealing with in this legislation.

I am not saying they're not good issues and that they're not a step in the right direction. But Minister, you fall short. You fall so short it's unbelievable when it comes to what you called comprehensive truck safety policy. In fact, the bill is not called "comprehensive truck safety policies"; it's called the "road safety package." I think after this point we're going to go through the committee process, we're going to have some debate on this particular bill, we're going to get it passed, then the minister is going to go away and hope the problem goes away because he doesn't want to get in a fight with the trucking association.

Hon Mr Palladini: Not a chance.

Mr Bisson: Minister, your record is not spot on. Bring that stuff forward. Don't do it by way of regulation. What I'm suggesting to you is that instead of doing things behind closed doors, why don't you bring the stuff out from behind closed doors? Allow the public and groups like CRASH and others to be there, to comment, to be part of the process so we can look at finding a comprehensive response to what is a very complex problem. To say we're going to make this problem go away just because of a couple of parts in a bill that deal with fines really falls short of what needs to be done.

Some of the stuff we could take a look at if we went that way: We could look at the issue of hours of work, how many hours a truck driver is allowed to drive on our highways. In Ontario we allow our drivers to drive longer, harder and farther than any other jurisdiction in North America. In the United States the maximum number of consecutive hours an American truck driver can drive is 10; in Ontario it's 13. Why don't we look at hours of work as one issue we can deal with?

Do you think it's safe, Minister, that somebody is behind the wheel of a huge vehicle such as a 110,000-tonne rig for 13 hours? You know as well as I do that the trip logs are played with. The driver is supposed to log when he has driven, what time he got into the truck and where he has been. You know as well as I do that that's played with and that drivers end up driving for longer than 13 hours. We need to deal with that. We can't just penalize the drivers, because they're doing it because of the scale of pay they're getting. We've got to deal with those issues.

First of all, it's not right from an industrial relations standpoint, in terms of what's fair to the driver, to put the drivers in those kinds of situations. Drivers should be paid an adequate wage to drive a truck and do it in a safe manner. With the kilometrage rates they're getting now, they're more or less forced to drive longer hours and drive a lot farther and a lot faster than they would really like to.

I was at Malette waferboard about a month ago. I was talking to one truck driver who was just leaving with his rig, and that's the comment the guy was making. He was saying, "The only way I can make a buck is that I've got to drive for the next 16 hours." I think we're really skirting around the bush when it comes to this particular issue.

We need to take a look at all those issues and bring them together and try to work with the industry, the motoring public, the groups and associations that represent the motoring public and the trucking industry, and the ministry so we can look at what needs to be done, and then we say: "We all take responsibility. Everybody has a role to play when it comes to dealing with this particular issue."

I say to the minister that this is a step in the right direction; I don't dispute that. Our caucus will support you on this legislation. I'm hoping you're going to reconsider the approach you've taken up to now and that you come back with a good, comprehensive policy or legislation to deal with this.

I just want to say by way of this debate that my caucus sponsored what is called a committee standing order 125, which would have dealt with looking at these issues from a broader perspective. We were supposed to start our public hearings on Monday, where the public and other people from the trucking associations etc would have had an opportunity to come forward and comment on how we can make the industry safer, to deal with all these issues.

In the spirit of cooperation with the government, I've decided to pull back that 125. We're doing that because we're saying: "Let's give the minister some credit. He has come forward with something that is a positive step."

We're saying to the minister, "We'll pull back our committee hearings, and instead we'll deal with these issues when this bill goes to committee over the next couple of weeks." Let's try it over there, but let's open our ears, let's listen to what people are saying, let's learn from the committee process, when people come before us, what we can be doing and set up some sort of process afterwards so we can deal with this in a comprehensive manner.

You know, Minister, that this problem cannot be solved by one single piece of legislation; it's much more complex than that. We need somehow to find a way to cut out partisan politics and deal with this as what it is: a safety issue. When it comes to safety issues, we need to keep straight who in the end we're representing. We shouldn't be representing our political parties; we should be representing the motoring public and the people within the industry.

We need to make sure for people that we have an industry that is as safe as it can be, at the same time ensuring that they can make a proper dollar so they can afford to do the kind of maintenance that needs to be done on their vehicles. We need to ensure that the truck drivers are properly trained; that they have the right to refuse unsafe work if there's an unsafe truck; that they're properly paid to do their job and we don't make them drive the long hours we sometimes force them to.

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With those comments, I would like to thank the minister, on behalf of the NDP caucus and my leader, Howard Hampton, for the legislation that is coming forward. We look forward to working with the minister at the committee level to bring forward some positive suggestions on how we can either enhance this legislation or look at a future process through which we are able to deal with some of the broader issues.

I plan in the next while, after those committee hearings, to give you my own report on the work we've been doing in our caucus with trucking companies, with the drivers, with unions, with various people involved in trucking companies. Some, I think, are positive recommendations that can be done to deal with that. The report is called Target Safety. I look forward to sitting down with the minister and presenting him with that information at a future date so that all of us, on all sides of the House, can get together to try to address what is a very important issue in Ontario, the issue of truck safety.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I want to congratulate the minister for bringing forward this road safety package which deals with not only truck safety but the problem of drinking and driving and other safety-related issues. I know he's gone through a tough time over the last couple of years. It hasn't been easy. There have been a lot of demands, a lot of scrutiny, a lot of public awareness about the importance of having safe trucks, and a safety initiative that deals especially with truck tires on our highways.

As I said, he hasn't shrunk from the challenge; he has faced it head-on. I know I've disagreed with him on how he's faced it at times and so forth, but I certainly knew it was his intention to deal with the issue, as the bottom line says, to make our roads safe. He did everything

possible to try to reduce the incidence of unsafe trucks on our highways.

As I said, it hasn't been easy for him. I do give him a pat on the back for that, a sincere pat on the back, because it's been very challenging. I know his ministry has been working very hard at it on all fronts. There have been a lot of human resources put on it. It's something that he should look upon as an accomplishment, but I think he realizes himself that there is still work to do. I heard him on the radio this morning talking about other initiatives that have to be followed through on.

The opposition, as well as being critical, has been very much supportive of anything that dealt with this challenge of making our roads safer. The opposition has played a positive role in this. I certainly commend the member from the third party, the member for Cochrane South, who reminded the minister that our own member for Essex-Kent, Pat Hoy, through a private member's bill, brought a lot of attention to bear on school bus safety. The member for Cochrane South went out of his way to commend Pat Hoy for his efforts in bringing that to the front.

Maybe the only criticism I'll make of the minister is that he should have perhaps gone above party politics and supported the bill Pat Hoy brought forward. I think that would have been the right thing to do, but I guess politically he couldn't do it. But at least he mentioned that Pat Hoy was instrumental in pushing the agenda on safety for our children on school buses.

I certainly want to commend our transportation critic, Dwight Duncan from Windsor-Walkerville, who also held the minister's feet to the fire. As you know, a couple of weeks ago we heard the Premier complaining that they couldn't bring forth the truck safety legislation because the opposition had been filibustering and they didn't have time. I think everybody, certainly inside this House and outside, knew that was a phony excuse, that something had happened within the Premier's office or the House leader's office whereby they didn't want to bring this bill forward, whereby they couldn't follow through with this bill. That's why the bill was not brought forward. The opposition was willing and able to debate it on a day's notice. We've got to give credit to the member for Windsor-Walkerville, who put forth his own private member's bill to further the cause of the minister bringing forth this bill as we have it today.

I think this is an example of where an opposition that is vigilant, that is involved in an issue can help bring forward good legislation. This is good legislation. It is something that is needed, it's something that I think the public supports and it's something that all of us on the official opposition side support. As the member for Windsor-Walkerville said, there are some aspects of it on which we're going to bring forward a couple of amendments in committee. Those are positive suggestions. Hopefully the minister and his staff will pay attention to that, to a couple of the suggestions.

I hope they also listen to the suggestion and the concern that Pat Hoy has in regard to that limit on the dollar amount of fines. He was very concerned that the \$400 limit may not involve the police. The police had some difficulty perhaps trying to pursue a higher fine. I

hope Pat Hoy gets a chance to explain that in committee and that the minister listens.

On the process side, I think it's a good example of where the opposition has done the minister a favour, in that if it wasn't for the opposition we wouldn't have had the speedy, expeditious bringing forth of this bill. It has brought it forward now, at the beginning of the summer months, the most heavily travelled months on our highways. It really benefits not only the minister, it benefits the travelling public and the motoring public across Ontario, that it's brought forward speedily. People are very quick and you can't blame them for criticizing the way this Legislative Assembly works, but this is an example of how it can work with significant input from the opposition benches.

There's a sincerity here. I listened to the comments of the member for Cochrane South. He put forward a lot of good ideas, sincere ideas, on what he thought could be added as we continue on, making this a more comprehensive package, putting more pieces together in this package. He reminded me of the fact that real truck safety has to do with more than just truck drivers or operators or even the companies; it's a total involvement by all partners who deal with road safety — the Ministry of Transportation, the OPP, the public and all the agencies and interest groups that get involved with highway safety.

Maybe for too long we've looked at road safety as a static 1970s, 1960s type of thing whereby things were moving incrementally. In the last seven or eight years we've seen quite a visible shift in what is happening on our roads. I don't mean that as a pun. I think we've seen a vast increase in the number of truck operators, the shift from rail to trucking. We've seen our highways visibly, and any of us who travel the highways see what the difference has been about.

That challenge of making our roads safe has been expedited because of the changing economic conditions. The travelling dynamics have changed. The economic dynamics: We talked about the just-in-time delivery system, where the warehousing doesn't take place as it used to back in the 1960s and 1970s, because of the cost. The just-in-time delivery system is an essential part of every business plan that industrial manufacturers have to have to be competitive. They have to get their goods delivered to their factory, to their industrial site when they need them. They can't afford to be holding goods in abeyance in some warehouse situation. That dynamic has really caused an immense amount of pressure on our highways, on the operators, on the trucking companies, and that manifests itself in some of the accidents that we see on our highways.

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There is this enormous competitive pressure and I think the minister has been trying to respond to that. That's why the minister knows it's not one piece of legislation that's going to do it; it's not two or three. It's really an ongoing commitment to this comprehensive approach to road safety.

I'm glad, in terms of this bill, that there is also attention paid to the drinking and driving dilemma. I think the minister has dealt with this in a tough but fair fashion. It is just not acceptable any more to have people endanger

the lives of innocent bystanders, innocent motorists with their drinking and driving, and I think the penalties and the measures taken are going to help. They're not going to solve it completely because, as we know, every time a law is passed, there is some other nuance which makes it difficult to implement.

Some of the statistics are quite shocking and the public should be aware of them. Drinking drivers are responsible for one third of the fatalities on Ontario highways. Besides the human cost, it costs \$2 billion every year to provide medical services for people who are victimized by drinking drivers. There's enormous cost in human life, in injury and in financial costs as a result of drinking drivers. Another frightening point is that one of these deaths occurs every 24 hours.

It's an ongoing, abhorrent activity that takes place. We are at least, by supporting this legislation, going to try and do something to bring that under control and to make a very public statement that it is not acceptable for this to continue. It has to be stopped. We can't tolerate this drinking and driving.

I also am glad that the minister has included some educational programs, some counselling programs along with the punitive approach. They have to be done because I think whether it be in drinking and driving or safe driving and safety on our highways, one interesting component that doesn't get enough investment is the educational component.

I know most of you who travel the highways or the streets in our main cities and our small cities agree that drivers are tending to be more and more aggressive. I think the safety conditions of our highways reflect that higher level of aggression which is on our highways, whether it be the result of this competitive pressure, the workplace stress — who knows? But I think on every street in a town or city or on the 401 or the 427 or Highway 69, the worst highway in Ontario, people are driving more aggressively, and when they drive aggressively they don't drive as safely. That heightens the level of anxiety and it heightens the chance of there being more accidents.

That type of anxiety and aggression on our highways should also be dealt with in educational programs. I know it's done to a certain extent. We see the ads every now and then, we see the RIDE programs. But I think there has to be a comprehensive investment in educating the public on safe, courteous, reasonable driving habits because it's something that is not done as a matter of course any more.

If you travel the 401, it's almost startling when you see someone travelling the speed limit, for instance: "What's wrong with that person? It must be someone who is just out for a Sunday drive." Everybody drives over the speed limit. It's part of this aggressive hell-bent-for-leather approach to driving, which I think can only be remedied by a comprehensive educational investment process whereby we tell people that, if you save that five minutes, what does it really get you if you get into an accident or if you hurt someone? There are just too many people driving too fast.

On our city streets it's incredible the attitude that motorists have. The running of red lights is almost

commonplace. At any major intersection in Metro, motorists habitually run red lights. You talk to the police officers in Metropolitan Toronto, and they say they cannot believe the regular pattern of people running red lights. The police officers have no ability to stop them because they are short-staffed. As you know, the police have even asked for lights, they've asked for cameras at high-collision intersections, to at least dissuade people from running red lights. That's one of the things I have asked the minister in the past. I've said, "Take a look at a red light camera at a high-collision intersection." We had a severe fatality at Dufferin and St Clair last summer, where a motorist ran through a red light and got a \$300 fine. Killed one person, injured about five others; ran a red light and got away with \$300.

There has to be a program in place which dissuades people from driving aggressively and habitually disobeying red lights, speed limits and basic rules of the road. It is epidemic, and that is what the minister, in part, is faced with on trying to make our highways safer. That is why his role or his challenge has been so great. It's not just a mechanical thing, it's not just a training of wheel installers; it's an attitudinal problem that has developed, and not just in Ontario.

There is this attitudinal shift whereby our highways are like speedways. Roads are basically speedways and God help anyone who is in your way. I think that can only be remedied if the minister continues to go on investing in regulating, monitoring and educating the motorists, educating truck drivers, educating the owners of the companies, the operators, letting them know that safety is to be complimented, safety is to be rewarded.

I know, I've talked to truck drivers myself, who are well intentioned, trying to make a living, and what they're saying is, "I sometimes have to be very careful if I approach the trucking company that I work for, if I continue to complain about the state of my rig." That shouldn't have to take place. I think the good trucking companies, the good operators, do want that input from their drivers, but there are too many who are basically intimidating drivers, saying, "Listen, you either take that truck out or forget the job." No one can say no to a job these days, especially the trucking industries. There are thousands of truckers who are out of work who are dying for any piece of work.

There has also got to be some kind of reward or some kind of mindset change within the trucking industry, where there's a systematic investment in safety teams, investment in safety committees, whereby the operators don't have this hanging over their heads about safety being sidetracked by the economic interests of the day.

That sort of mindset change will make the minister's ultimate goal a lot more achievable, because this bill, as good as it is — and I think it's certainly going in the right direction — is not going to get rid of flying truck tires. We're still going to have them. We're still going to have rigs on our roads without their brakes in proper working order, with bald tires; that still is going to happen. That is why the minister must continue to take very fundamental steps in terms of shifting the mindset of people in the business, the motoring public and our government's attitude.

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For example, here's one of the things people constantly complain to me about. They say: "Everywhere you look on our city streets, there are people being paid by the government to hand out tickets. Everywhere you turn around, there's some person giving someone a ticket, yet at the intersection where people are running through red lights, you can't find a cop." They're saying: "Why are we paying all these green hornets, yellow hornets, blue hornets, parking enforcement officers, giving out tickets to some person parked on a side street going in to buy a loaf of bread, when meanwhile there are people running red lights and you can't get enough officers on the street corners to enforce that kind of basic safety?"

That comes to the whole issue of a government's priorities. It's not a provincial government priority by itself; it has to go right down to municipal priorities also, saying that maybe safety officers are more important than ticketing officers. Maybe you should have more police officers who are checking for people running red lights or checking for people driving dangerously or driving drunk, more than you need to hire all these people ticketing parked cars all over the city.

Maybe that is something the minister can have a discussion about, because I know his responsibility goes beyond the main thoroughfares. He's the lead person in setting the right attitude towards motor safety, motor vehicle inspections, policing of our highways. He can really set the tone. My suggestion is that you have discussions with local police officers, the police services boards, about regional governments and municipal governments investing in safety rather than parking tickets.

In terms of the role of government, as you know, when this minister first came to the Legislature, I think he was persuaded by the backroom whiz kids that government should take a back seat and should not regulate, should not get involved in such an issue, that essentially the marketplace would take care of itself, that the market forces would take care of road safety.

I think the minister has come to realize that doesn't work. There are certain things government has to do. Government must intervene to make our roads safer. That's why this bill is something the NDP and the Liberals would do for sure. We believe in government intervention when it's needed. The Reform types feel, "Oh, no, government can't intervene there," but government has to regulate the trucking industry. Government has to ensure that wheel installers are trained. Government has to impose fines. Government has to invest in highways. Government has to invest in safety, and you have to have OPP officers on those highways.

I think that's why this minister over the last couple of years has put forth more and more legislation, because he knows government cannot have a laissez-faire attitude towards safety. It doesn't work. The marketplace will end up causing all kinds of disruptions and accidents on our highways, because the marketplace doesn't care about safety.

What the marketplace cares about first of all, as you know, is the bottom line. If safety happens to be part of that, fine. That's why this government had to intervene in

road safety, in the trucking business. As much as the trucking industry wants to be left alone, the public has been very clear and the opposition has been very clear that the trucking industry has to be watched, has to be regulated, that the trucking industry cannot be left to its own devices.

I think even the trucking industry now realizes it has to cooperate with government in terms of making its trucks safer and our roads safer, because those roads do not belong to the trucking companies; those roads do not belong to that motorist. Those roads belong to all Ontarians. Therefore they must be made safe for all Ontarians. There's no special interest group that owns those roads, and that's why it's paramount that safety has to be inclusive of all Ontarians.

It doesn't matter whether you're driving a Lincoln Continental, a pickup truck or an 18-wheeler, or you're on a motorcycle. Those roads have to be made safe for everyone. That is what has to happen in terms of this attitudinal change in saying that we cannot just leave safety up to the private sector, because the private sector will not put safety first unless government holds their feet to the fire.

That's what this bill starts to do more of and what this bill essentially has to give out as a message to everyone, whether it be with the drunk driving restrictions and the fines etc and also in terms of taking safety seriously. We must not for a moment think that a person who owns a truck owns that road. We must ensure that they are aware of the fact that the little vehicle has as much right on the road as the commercial vehicle and that the safety of that vehicle is paramount in importance.

I remember I happened to be on the highway the day when just outside of Oshawa that flying truck tire came across and took off the top of that car and killed a woman, unfortunately, on the way eastward from Toronto. I thought it was so ironic that there I was, a member of the Legislature who is involved in transportation as a critic. I think that was almost an ominous message for me, to say that if I have the ability as a member of this Legislature to do something about making our roads safer, it is my obligation and duty to do that.

At least I am not as helpless as a lot of people on our roads are. At least I can talk to the minister. I can do what Pat Hoy did, present a private member's bill, or what Dwight Duncan from Windsor-Walkerville did, present his private member's bill. We can do something. Thankfully we, as members of this Legislature, can make a contribution to road safety.

I know a lot of people think this bill will be only a part of the solution and won't really do anything. I think it will. I'm a bit more optimistic now. I wasn't optimistic a year ago. I thought that perhaps they were trying to do a lot of window dressing around truck safety. There were a lot of photo ops, there were a lot of press conferences. People said, "A lot of smoke but where's the meat?" I think that now we're getting to the meat, that this is starting to be substantive.

That's why I said from the beginning that I've told the minister that he is now on the right track, he has turned the corner. I think this bill is a demonstration of his commitment, and we in the opposition are going to make sure

that he continues to put this as a priority. Even though sometimes the Premier may have different ideas about the agenda, we are saying we want to push this safety agenda as much as possible, because there are just too many people who — if you're on the highway, everybody tells me, every time a truck comes beside them they take a very concerned look towards the wheels. It's almost automatic now when you're on the highway. You say, "I hope that truck's okay." I hope that by the time this minister is through, people stop looking towards trucks in fear, that we go back to thinking: "Hey, that truck is inspected. That truck has got a well-trained operator. That company has probably got all its ducks in order. That is not something I'm going to be afraid of any more."

But right now I think the majority of Ontario motorists, when they're on our highways, are very concerned when they see a big truck coming by. This bill is a step towards ensuring that's no longer the case, but the minister must continue with a major initiative in educating drivers, an education that is meaningful. It just can't be your random television ads. It can't be your random radio ad at Christmastime. We need a comprehensive education program in the responsibilities of driving, especially for young people.

There are too many young people who don't look at driving as a serious privilege and responsibility. They look upon it almost as something they do for recreation. I think one of the things this minister might be able to do is to encourage the Minister of Education, whom I see there with his back to me, to work in partnership. I know the Minister of Transportation is interested in safety and I hope he can get the Minister of Education to take that same concern and put some money into educating and into promoting safety in our schools. Start right from

grade 1; go from bicycle safety right up to driving education.

That's one of the things I'm saying in closing: Have a heart-to-heart talk with the Minister of Education. Get together and put some money into changing people's attitudes. You're not going to do it perhaps with the older generation, but start with young children. Explain that road safety, driving safety is something that helps and protects everyone. We all have to drive, we all have to make a living, so if we've got an attitude that I think is protective, we're all going to benefit.

We're going to support this bill. As I said, you're going in the right direction. You've turned the corner. I wish you good luck in continuing to do this as you go forward.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Seeing none, does the minister wish to respond?

Hon Mr Palladini: I want to reiterate my thanks to the opposition for supporting this bill. I have thoroughly enjoyed the comments and input of all the members. I'm a lot more knowledgeable after this particular debate today than I was prior.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Palladini has moved second reading of Bill 138.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Mr Palladini: Madam Speaker, to the standing committee on social development.

The Acting Speaker: The bill will be referred to the standing committee on social development.

It now being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1802.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury East / -Est	Martel, Shelley (ND)
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Samia	Boushy, Dave (PC)	Windsor-Riverside	Vacant
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		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

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First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 9 June 1997

Lundi 9 juin 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 juin 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): My statement is addressed to the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I would like to remind both of them that since, and with the approval of, Bill 106, they have eliminated business taxes to the tune of \$1.6 billion. This responsibility dumped on to the local municipalities represents a huge amount that they will have to find somewhere else; \$1.6 billion that the municipalities now will have to find somewhere else.

Let me remind the Premier and the minister that it is quite clear that without this money, municipalities cannot afford to subsist and provide sufficient needs they are accustomed to providing to their taxpayers at present. Since municipalities only have one source of income — realty taxes and business taxes — that money now will have to come from one source: the homeowner and the small business community.

It is most unfortunate that the Premier and the minister are picking on the two most vulnerable groups in our society. I hope they reconsider and do the right thing.

ROLAND HARDY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): It's with extreme sadness that I advise this chamber of the passing on Sunday of Roland Hardy. Roland Hardy, as we in Niagara well know, served as a regional councillor for the last three years. His political career spanned four decades. He was first elected to Crowland township as an alderman, then to Welland city council and then serving as mayor of our city with dignity and grace and a powerful but understated sense of leadership.

He was truly one of the great citizens of our community and also a great Canadian. As a francophone, his advocacy of the role for francophones and of the need to maintain the French language and French culture in our community, in our province and in our country was unparalleled.

A trade unionist, he won the respect of his peers, as he was elected to leadership positions by his co-workers at Atlas Specialty Steels. He was a strong believer in co-op housing, as he was one of the groups that was instrumental in developing one of the most recent co-op housing projects in Welland.

We will surely miss him. Our sympathies are being extended to his wonderful wife, Vivianne, to his sons, Raymond, Marcel and Jean-Guy, and to his daughters, Dahlia and Doris. He was a great Wellander and a great Canadian.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I rise to bring attention to a serious issue in not only my riding of Oshawa but the entire province as well: road safety. I am proud to say that last week Oshawa participated in the 1997 Road Safety Challenge. The challenge is judged on the comparison of the lowest per capita collision rate, and locally Durham Regional Police officers are issuing T-shirts for all those contributing to safer roads.

Oshawa's Road Safety Challenge included the promotion of child safety seats and Seatbelt Safety Day, Seniors and Pedestrian Safety Day and Arrive Alive, Don't Drink and Drive.

This type of community effort takes place not only in my riding of Oshawa but all across the province as well. It so happened that I attended a funeral in Sault Ste Marie last week and was very impressed with the reaction of the community as the procession went by. Not only did all the traffic voluntarily halt as the procession went by, but pedestrians stopped whatever they were doing and removed their hats in respect. This is the type of care and concern that emphasizes the commitment we need to make every day in all of our communities.

While the city of Oshawa and other communities competed with each other to see who will be the winner of the challenge, the real winners are the citizens of the communities across the province who benefit from our safer roads.

I'd like to say to the gang in the Sault, "See you at camp." More importantly, I'd like to congratulate all those volunteers and individuals who commit to making our roads that much safer.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It is with a great deal of interest that I note that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Health were in Sudbury this morning to make a reinvestment announcement. Certainly I wish I had been invited to that announcement so that it truly could have been a joint effort with all three parties, but that's not the way this government works.

What I am seriously concerned about, though, is that after the statement took place, I wonder if they met with the Sudbury Regional Hospital Corp's chair-designate.

He's requested a meeting with the minister because he's got serious concerns about transfer payments to the hospitals and the compound effect that's going to have when it comes down to the new Sudbury Regional Hospital Corp.

He's talking about an annualized effect of \$4.4 million less in transfer payments, and he's concerned that there is absolutely no way they will be able to function effectively if that isn't re-examined. All he's asking for is that this government and this Minister of Health meet with the new chair and the new board-elect to discuss the possibility of increasing transfer payments to ensure that there is some type of labour adjustment policy or clause written into this transfer payment so that there will not have to be unnecessary layoffs occurring without any discussion at all.

ONTARIO STUDENT ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to bring to the attention of the House the decision this year of the Minister of Education and Training, without notice, to ensure that the Ontario student assistance program will no longer cover and give assistance to part-time students for the costs of their part-time courses at the post-secondary level.

I give you an example of a student who, in 1993, began working on her bachelor of arts at the University of Waterloo distance education program. That student has always carried a 20% to 40% caseload and has averaged 72% overall and 78% in her major. She has now been told that unless she takes a 60% caseload she will not be able to get OSAP assistance. If she's a full-time student, she will have difficulty dealing with her family and the fact that she works full time.

She's already applied for her fall semester. She can't change her caseload now to 60%. She has her family commitments to be concerned about and she's worried that her grades will fall if she has to take an additional amount. Somehow she has to come up with \$660 by this September.

Will the Minister of Education and Training —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

1340

SAM MCCALLION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It is a privilege to stand in the Legislature today to talk about Sam McCallion, Mayor Hazel McCallion's husband, who died on May 14. As one of our city's most admired people, Sam has been posthumously honoured as this year's recipient of the Gordon S. Shipp Memorial Award, which recognizes the Mississauga citizen of the year.

A printer and photographer by profession, Sam was one of the greatest supporters of the town of Streetsville. He founded the Streetsville Chamber of Commerce, the Streetsville Booster newspaper and Streetsville's Bread and Honey Festival.

Sam was also a lay reader for 42 years at Trinity Anglican Church, where his funeral was held. In his eulogy, Canon Harold Percy said, "Sam learned early in life what some people never learn: that giving is the highest form of life."

In 1994, Sam received a Paul Harris Fellowship, the highest honour given by Rotary International for citizenship. The legacy of Sam's role model will continue through the Sam McCallion Volunteer of the Year award which is sponsored by the Streetsville Lions Club and the Mississauga Booster.

In Hazel's words, "While Sam is no longer with us, he leaves behind a loving family whose lives he has deeply touched and his sense of community spirit, integrity and compassion for his fellow man which will be long remembered."

Sam, you surely made our cup runneth over. We will miss you and we will remember and love you always.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Ever since the Mike Harris government started its agenda of slashing health care in this province, the patients have had to pay the price. I've encountered many cases where the government's cuts to hospitals have caused major problems, even death. I would like to point out to the Premier one such case.

In April, Mr Percy Trepanier from Tilbury West township was in hospital for hip surgery. Mr Trepanier was well on the road to recovery when complications arose. The family believes that delays in producing X-rays, overworked nursing staff and the fact that there were no beds available in the ICU led to a rapid worsening of his condition.

Premier, you are cutting and it is hurting patients. Mr Trepanier's family says the nurses were dangerously overworked, sometimes having as few as one nurse for 15 patients. There were no beds available in the ICU and tests took too long to produce.

The staff is not to blame. Your cuts have shrunk the support staff. You have cut and closed beds and your cuts have caused nurses to be drastically overworked. Nurses provide primary care and oversee the patients' progress. There are no frills. These are necessary parts of the health care system, a system you and your government have allowed to decay to a shell of its former self.

Mr Trepanier died the day before he was to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary. The family have returned the Premier's congratulatory scroll to his office.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Last week in London, Ontario, there was an international conference on children exposed to family violence, hosted by the London Family Court Clinic.

Over 750 participants from all over the world came to this conference. Not only were people there from all over Canada, but there were 40 different jurisdictions in the United States represented, and over six countries.

One of the elements of this conference which I expect I will talk about on a number of occasions in this place was a visit to a school in my riding, Sir Winston Churchill Public School, a school that has put in place a safe schools program that is frankly the envy of the world.

This is a program based on a very firm position that children have rights and responsibilities, that parents have rights and responsibilities, and that teachers have rights

and responsibilities and that the job of a school environment is to create a safe, caring place.

The watch words for this school are the following: respect, responsibility, cooperation and do your best. Every participant within that school, whether teacher or student, whether parent or community member, is expected to adhere to those principles. It works. I would invite anyone to come and see Sir Winston Churchill —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

NEPEAN ECONOMY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I am thrilled to be able to report that Northern Telecom announced the company will hire 5,000 new employees and invest more than \$250 million in Nepean to upgrade and expand the company's research, product development and business base in Nepean.

Nortel already employs more than 10,000 people in Nepean. With this announcement, Nortel's expansion is expected to generate more than 10,000 new net infrastructure jobs. The economic spinoffs of this expansion are extraordinary. The local economy could see an additional 10,000 to 20,000 spinoff jobs directly as a result of this announcement. This is good news for home builders, small businesses and the retail and hospitality sector.

To quote Gedas Sakus, president of Nortel technology: "Nortel is expanding in the region because it is the high-tech centre of Canada. The talent we can attract to Ottawa is allowing us to win international markets."

Nortel is the high-tech engine of our local economy. With \$4.2 billion in exports and a Canadian workforce of 22,000, they are truly a Canadian success story. Nortel has done it on their own; no government handouts were part of the announcement on Friday.

Congratulations to Nortel president John Roth and Nortel technology president Gedas Sakus and to the thousands of Nortel employees who made this announcement possible.

If Ontario is to create 725,000 net new jobs, Nepean is going to be the first riding to complete the task — 101,000 net new jobs in the last three months. That's more jobs, more hope and more opportunity for a better and brighter Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I'd like to request unanimous consent for the member for Scarborough East and the member for Brampton North to respond to that statement.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Unanimous consent for the members for Scarborough East and Brampton North to respond to that statement? No. I heard some no's.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOURISM AWARENESS WEEK

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): It is my very great pleasure to inform members and our viewers that today

marks the beginning of an extremely important week, Ontario Tourism Awareness Week.

During this week, Leo Jordan, my parliamentary assistant responsible for tourism, and I will be travelling across this great province, helping communities celebrate the enormous contribution tourism makes to our economy and as a creator of high-quality jobs. For many of us, our first experience in the business world was working in the tourism industry.

Tourism is now the fastest-growing industry in the world, and because we are determined in Ontario to increase our share of it, we have chosen as our theme for Tourism Awareness Week "Ontario Tourism: The Global Industry in Our Backyard."

Like the rest of Ontario's economy, the tourism sector has made excellent gains in the last two years. Tourism is now our sixth-largest export industry, contributing \$13.6 billion to our economy annually, which results in nearly \$2 billion in tax revenues to the province each year.

The tourism industry in Ontario now directly and indirectly employs approximately 415,000 people, or over 7% of the province's workforce. As I mentioned the other day in the House, the tourism industry is also a major employer for students. It provides thousands of jobs for our youth each year, who find part-time employment in areas like marinas or working in various facets of the hospitality industry which serve tourists in our urban and rural centres or even through jobs attached to outdoor sporting activities.

Our tax cuts clearly support the tourism industry by putting more disposable income in people's pockets. Most tourist operators fully benefit from the elimination of the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll since most of them have modest payrolls below that level.

I believe Ontario's tourism industry is the quintessential small business. In a recent meeting arranged by my ministry between the tourism industry and the Canadian Bankers Association, tourism industry operators learned how they can benefit from the positive measures outlined in the recent Ontario budget, including how to access capital.

Later this evening, my parliamentary assistant Leo Jordan and I will join about 200 of Ontario's leading tourism industry representatives at their two-day tourism forum. At this forum, delegates will develop an action plan to increase Ontario's competitiveness as a tourist destination.

In conclusion, I encourage all members to use the tourism material we forwarded to all members' offices to help raise awareness of the importance of tourism in their communities. All of us during Tourism Awareness Week should take time to consider the growing impact of tourism in our communities as it continues to expand and create new jobs in this province.

We live in a special land that is unique in all the world, a land that is blessed with vast natural resources that enhance fascinating wilderness experiences, and bustling urban centres that are vibrant with a rich multicultural mix. Let's join together to make these experiences a celebration for our visitors. Help us celebrate the achievements of our valued partners in tourism.

1350

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): Later today I will introduce a bill that will improve the way government manages fish and wildlife resources in Ontario by giving us tougher enforcement provisions and more protection for a wider range of species.

Fish and wildlife management is a priority for this government. It is also a personal priority for myself. Today's action will also fulfil a promise made to many people who value our natural resources to bring forward modernized legislation for fish and wildlife management in the province.

With more than seven million people participating in fish-and-wildlife-related activities in Ontario each year, we can all recognize that the effective management of fish and wildlife is vital to the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the province. Both the ministry and the public have recognized for some time that significant changes were required to the Game and Fish Act in order to sustain the province's fish and wildlife resources.

With this bill we will replace the seriously outdated Game and Fish Act. When it comes into effect, the new Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, will demonstrate Ontario's commitment to natural resources conservation efforts. The legislative changes proposed in the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act were developed through consultation with a wide variety of client groups. I want to thank them for their important input. I also want to thank the MNR staff, some of whom are in the gallery today, on the development of this bill.

The bill proposes changes in three broad areas: better protection and management of a broader range of species; better enforcement capability; and better client service. The improvements reflect the great importance of fish and wildlife resources to this government. For example, black bear populations will be further protected. It will also be illegal to intentionally interfere with black bear dens or to damage dens. The species will also be added to the list of those which may not be hunted while the animal is swimming.

Enforcement efforts will be made more effective. For example, the limitation period on prosecutions will be increased from six months to two years. As well, to help prevent Ontario being used as a base for illegal trade activities, we will prohibit the possession of wildlife and fish that were illegally taken in or from another jurisdiction.

The bill reflects the value placed on fish and wildlife resources by providing penalties for commercial offences of up to \$100,000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years, and by allowing the courts to order community service or training for violations.

A number of client-service-oriented changes will be made. For instance, we will have a better basis for establishing new business relationships with our partners. A clear legal framework will also be established to recognize the valuable work of Ontario's wildlife rehabilitators.

Property owners will be able to legally hire an animal control agent to deal with nuisance wildlife.

Introduction of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act is the next big step being taken by our government for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife. We have come this far with the help of a lot of people. I look forward to having the bill passed so we can make a significant contribution to ensuring the sustainability of Ontario's fish and wildlife resources and the sustainability of environmental, social and economic benefits associated with those resources.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I note with some interest the way the minister delivered this presentation today. He emphasised the fact that there is going to be better enforcement. It surprises me that he says that when just before the election they said there would be no cuts to conservation officers. After the election, in their first year in power, they cut the conservation officers by 20%.

I would suggest, Minister, that you continue the consultation with the groups you've consulted with, because you're going to need their help to ensure that you do what your government said they were going to do.

This minister's sense of timing is always incredible. Here we have a minister who flew up to Sudbury in a Ministry of Natural Resources plane to make a good-news financial announcement on restructuring and reinvestment. He didn't fly over Timmins; he didn't fly over the other portions of northeastern Ontario. He was too busy landing, making a good-news announcement.

Timmins is burning, northeastern Ontario is burning, northwestern Ontario is burning, and this minister stands up here and gives us fluff. What we want, what the people of Ontario want, what the people of northern Ontario want, is protection — protection against forest fires, protection of natural resources — and we don't get it with this minister.

What we do get, what we always get, is lip-service. You know what? Northern Ontario quite frankly is tired of lip-service from this minister. It is unbelievable that this is the Minister of Natural Resources who cannot, who will not, ensure that the natural resources of northern Ontario are protected through sound policies. He's so busy downloading the cost of forest fire management on to people who can't afford it, yet he stands in the House today and makes an announcement that, if carried through, won't be a bad announcement — it's long overdue; we worked on it — but the timing is terrible.

It reminds me a little bit of early Roman history. Here we have the emperor playing the fiddle while northern Ontario burns. Let me tell you, if the emperor of Ontario were really wise, what he'd do with this minister is give him the hook.

TOURISM AWARENESS WEEK

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I want to respond to the minister's statement regarding Ontario Tourism Awareness Week. I would suggest that the awareness should first take place in his own ministry, where last week they put out a publication that showed that the Museum of Civilization, which was supposedly number 8 of the tourist attractions in Ontario, is located in Hull. I'd also like to suggest that he do the same thing

with regard to those people seeking lodging accommodation in northwest Ontario, who find that they have to call Winnipeg to get those references.

We have again a lot of talk but not a lot of action. The government has been closing provincial parks. They have been cutting funding to such places as the St Lawrence Parks Commission. They have been doing a lot of things that belie the statements they make. I'll give you an example: The minister touts the fact that he's creating a lot of youth employment, when in fact Ontario has an abysmal record of youth employment, with the figures showing that as of May 18.9% of youth is unemployed in Ontario and over the five months from December it's 18.5%, compared to last year at 16.3%.

The minister has stated that later today he and his parliamentary assistant will be joining a group to develop an action plan to increase Ontario's competitiveness as a tourist destination. I would suggest to him that the time has long passed when we should be developing an action plan. This government has been in place for two years; there's a time when we should be getting action, not plans for action.

Tourism has always been a major sector in this economy. All you have to do is take a look at our licence plates and you'll see it's "Yours to Discover." But somehow or other this minister and this government haven't discovered the fact that there are lots of things they are doing that are working counterproductive to the tourism industry. We see that the assessment changes being made are going to impact on small businesses, we see the problems with unemployment, we see the problems with underfunding, and we see the problems where this ministry seems to be giving a lot of lip-service but very little action.

1400

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It's certainly good today to see the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism on his feet saying something about the economy of this province. It's about time he focussed his attention on Ontario. He spends far too much time flitting around the world to places like Japan and Germany and the United States of America, not knowing that under his very feet the economy of this province is sifting away like sand.

It's appropriate that today we recognize the efforts of the folks out there who are struggling to make ends meet in the tourism industry. It is indeed a viable and an important part of the economy of our province. But for this minister for a second to stand up and to suggest that the panacea to youth employment — that his government and he himself have done anything to enhance the viability of the tourism industry in Ontario is to belie the truth.

The tourist operators in northwestern Ontario are beside themselves with the fact that there is absolutely no money being put into marketing of what they have to offer in their major market areas. As a matter of fact, the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and places like Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and the Dakotas, are way ahead of us.

Minister, when are you going to take your job seriously about anything with regard to the economy and in particular tourism in this province?

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I want to respond briefly to the statement made by the Minister of Natural Resources. When you try and tell the public and this House that fish and wildlife are a priority for this government, a priority for you, that's a joke.

You were the minister who allowed over 10% of your staff to be cut last fall; 2,000 staff from your Ministry of Natural Resources have got their pink slips and are going out the door. Your ministry and your government are not capable any more of protecting fish or wildlife or our forestry resources or our aggregate resources in this province and that's the fact, and that's what you should be talking about in this House today.

Just take a look at what's happened to fire and then what happens to our natural resources. You were the one who cut 17 of the 19 fire bases in this province last year. You kept two open: one in your riding and one in the riding of the finance minister.

We have a situation in Gogama where this minister cut the fire crew. Last week fire crews that used to be based in Gogama were driving back and forth from Timmins, where they are now based, to try and provide fire protection near Gogama. At the same time we've got two crews from Sudbury that are being housed in a motel room in Gogama with a helicopter on standby to provide fire protection. What sense does that make? We're spending all kinds of additional financial resources when you should have kept the fire base open in Gogama. But you're more interested in cut, cut, cut than you are in protecting the natural resources in this province.

Let's take a look at the environment. We know that two months ago the jurisdiction for the Niagara Escarpment Commission moved from the Minister of Environment and Energy over to the Minister of Natural Resources. Do you know that in the last year we have had seven people who have had to leave the Niagara Escarpment Commission, and those people have yet to be appointed? The chair has not been reappointed and the senior staff person of the Niagara Escarpment Commission has not been appointed. Some one month ago, the Niagara Escarpment Commission for the first time ever in its history, Minister, under your tenure, did not have quorum to deal with a development application on the Niagara Escarpment. That's what's happening under your watch in Ontario now.

It's a joke for you to stand in this House today and talk about the new legislation you're bringing forward, because you, sir, do not have the staff at the Ministry of Natural Resources any more to protect fish, to protect wildlife, to protect our timber or to protect aggregates. That's the shame of it.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Both statements today, of the Minister of Tourism and of the Minister of Natural Resources: We're looking forward to the legislation he's going to bring forward and to analysing it to see what it's going to do for northern Ontario and for the people in the province.

On both of the statements: You go through two years of cut, slash and burn and take money out of the economy in northern Ontario, lay off thousands of people

within MNR, and tourism is not much better, and then all of a sudden you expect that two years later we're going to get two statements in here that are going to mean a whole change for northern Ontario.

There are high gas prices, the roads are falling apart, and there's all the money that's being taken out. There is nothing the two ministers' statements today can do that is going to turn Ontario around as far as tourism is concerned. It's just been destroyed over the last two years. We need something to change it and those two statements won't do it.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The following is the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to improve the Efficiency of the Environmental Approvals Process and Certain Other Matters / Loi visant à améliorer l'efficacité du processus d'autorisation environnementale et concernant certaines autres questions.

ANNIVERSARY OF MEMBERS' ELECTION

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to a couple of individuals who are celebrating their 20th anniversary of election to this place.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Do the members want to know who they are first? Unanimous consent? Okay. I warned you. Agreed.

Hon Mr Eves: That is a good warning indeed, Mr Speaker, and a good note to start off with these two.

The members for St Catharines and Carleton, Mr Bradley and Mr Sterling, were both elected to this place on June 7, 1977, and as remarkable as it may seem to some of us here, they managed to get re-elected in elections in 1981, 1985, 1987, 1990 and 1995, proving the old adage wrong, that you can fool all the people most of the time.

They have a lot in common. Mr Sterling is currently the Minister of Environment; Mr Bradley was formerly the Minister of the Environment. Mr Bradley is currently his party's House leader; Mr Sterling is his party's deputy House leader. They both previously served as critic for treasury and economic ministries for previous governments. But there the similarities cease.

Jim Bradley was interim leader of his party from November 1991 to February 1992; Norm was the wannabe interim leader of his party. Norm was instrumental in developing freedom of information legislation and modernizing Ontario's liquor laws; Jim uses the legislation. Jim worked very hard for 10 years as a teacher and served on St Catharines city council for seven years; Norm practised law and engineering and had two university degrees prior to election. Some would say he was educated beyond his intelligence — but I wouldn't; I might add that.

On a much more serious note, I have two personal anecdotes which I think —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Did you say anecdotes or antidotes?

Hon Mr Eves: Anecdotes, not antidotes; that will come later, Bud — which I think display both individuals' approach to elected office.

As a newly elected member in 1981, I can recall the then parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, about to attend an Attorneys General conference, making sure that he included a young, newly elected member to the delegation going on behalf of the province of Ontario. That, I think, portrays exactly what Norm Sterling's approach to being a member of the Legislature has been about. He has always included newly elected members; he has always been available for advice and counsel to those newly elected members, not only of his caucus but other parties as well.

In a very similar situation, Jim Bradley was the Minister of the Environment when there was a train derailment in my riding, just south of Parry Sound. One of the very first phone calls I received at 5 am — everybody knows how much I like to get up at 5 am — was from the Minister of the Environment, asking me if I wanted to accompany him to the site of the train derailment by helicopter so that, together, we could view the site and determine what should happen. I think that speaks very well of the approach of the member for St Catharines to his term of elected office for some 20 years in this place.

They both share a tremendous amount of respect for Parliament and its traditions. They both have served their constituents very well without losing their commonplace touch and their sense of humour. They are both very well respected members of their respective caucuses. As I said a few moments ago, members can rely upon each of them for advice and counsel, especially in the most difficult of times.

Both have developed a tremendous amount of respect, not only from other members of the Legislature of Ontario but from the general public as well. We are indeed fortunate to have individuals of this character serving the people of Ontario, even though some might question their sanity about being here for 20 years.

1410

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): On behalf of my colleagues, I want to join the Minister of Finance in paying tribute to the members for Carleton and for St Catharines. I want to say to Jim and Norm that if Lewis Mackenzie had gotten that kind of endorsement from the current Minister of Finance, who knows what might have happened a week ago today?

In his inimitable style, Mr Eves has highlighted some of the unique characteristics that we honour today. I see in the weekend national capital press that 300 well-wishers gathered at North Gower on Saturday night to pay tribute to the local member who, I know his colleagues from the eastern caucus would want me to say, is tireless in his ministrations to the community needs of Carleton-Grenville as it was 20 years ago. Think of it, Norm: 20 years ago when you came in here John Baird and Tony Clement were in kindergarten studying Milton

Friedman as you dedicated yourself to putting some kind of democratic restraint on Roy McMurtry, which was not easily done back in those years.

I think Mr Eves pointed out how, back in those late 1970s, the very strong-willed Minister of Justice of the day was never seen without Norm Sterling someplace in the distance crying, "Freedom of information, Roy, freedom of information; let the information flow," in a way that I don't seem to think is government policy today. I don't think we've ever had a lawyer-engineer combination in this place before, and it is certainly no small tribute to the intellectual prowess of the member for Carleton.

What can I say about the member for St Catharines, except that he's our House leader; we have to be very deferential, and we always are. He seems to have borne the burdens of office and the opportunities of opposition in a rather different way than the member for Carleton. He has more gravitas, more weight, in a sense, but no grey hair at all. He certainly is someone who can tell you all you ever need to know about St Catharines and provide at the same time tickets to a Sabers game, a Blue Jays game, a Canadiens game. You name it, Ticketmaster has an agent in this place, and his name is Bradley.

Seriously, to both our colleague from St Catharines and the member for Carleton, the Liberal caucus pays tribute for 20 long years of dedicated service. We wish them many happy returns and many more to come.

Mr Wildman: I rise on behalf of our caucus to extend congratulations to the two members who are celebrating their 20th year in this House today. As was indicated, both have served — one is now currently and the other did formerly — as Minister of Environment. Both have a tremendous interest in the Niagara Escarpment and have indicated their commitment to the preservation of that very important land form in this province.

I go back a while with both of these members. The member for St Catharines does — I know most members won't understand this — have a life outside of this place. He seems to be here all the time. He always seems to show up to make those two-minute interventions at the end of everyone's speech. He seems to come puffing through the door just in time to do it. He also has a tendency to have a petition on just about everything, not just VLTs in every corner store, in every neighbourhood, in every community, in every restaurant and every bar in this province. I've often wondered how many people actually sign those petitions.

But he does indeed have a life outside this place. As indicated, he's a tremendous sports fan. I've been lucky enough to be able to accompany him to Sabres games on occasion, and we've enjoyed the evenings. We have a mutual friend in the current coach of the Buffalo Sabres, Ted Nolan, who is originally from my riding, the Garden River First Nation, and who is a good friend of both of us.

When Mr Bradley was Minister of the Environment, we used to wonder how his arms did not continue to grow, because he used to come into this place with a briefcase in this hand and a briefcase in that hand and briefing notes under both arms. He'd pile them on both his desk and the adjoining desk; I don't think he ever

looked at any one of those things. I couldn't understand this until I once had the misfortune to have to visit his office. Now, if any of you have ever visited Mr Bradley's office, you'll know that his notes, when he brought them in here, were just an extension of that office. There are boxes everywhere. I don't know how he can find anything, but he seems to know where everything is.

The member for Carleton — obviously we go back a long way. He comes from the community in which I grew up, Manotick; he has been referred to on occasion as the member from Manotick in this place. I know he has worked very hard on many issues. One of the issues he used to raise continually, and did lead to changes, was living wills, which I know he took very seriously. Some would suggest that his 20 years in this place is a testament to that and indeed itself is a living will.

Also, I want to point out that as deputy House leader, I hope the member for Carleton will consult with the member for Nepean. He and Mr Bradley are among the few in this place who remember what it was like when we used to have regular evening sittings in this assembly. There was always the tendency — no members here now included — for some to perhaps imbibe a little at supper. We used to come back here sometimes and have, shall we say, very interesting sessions in the evening; not that we achieved a great deal on most of those, but we did indeed have some interesting sessions. So I hope the member for Carleton will consult with the member for Nepean, who seems to have made a speech today arguing that his proposals, so-called, for rule changes in this House are the reason Nortel has invested in all these jobs in Nepean.

I would just say sincerely, congratulations to the member for Carleton and the member for St Catharines on 20 years of serving their constituents and the people of this province on both sides of the House. On a personal note, a few years ago when I went through a very difficult time, both of them were very quick and honest in their expression of sincere friendship, and I really did appreciate it at the time as a friend of both these gentlemen. Congratulations.

The Speaker: Since they're both here, it's difficult to see which one goes first, so I'll simply decide: the member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. You're going to be accused of favouring the opposition for that.

Mr Conway: There's a first time for everything.

Mr Bradley: A first time for everything, as the member from Renfrew says.

I want to first thank Ernie Eves for his very kind remarks, along with Sean Conway and Bud Wildman. In this House we're supposed to call them by their constituencies, but I guess this is a bit of a special occasion when this happens.

I want to say, first of all, that it's been a privilege and an honour — that almost goes without saying — to serve in this assembly for any period of time, let alone 20 years. I've had the opportunity to serve under five different premiers. Premier Davis was the Premier when I came in and Frank Miller was the Premier right after that for a brief period of time. Frank was an extremely well-

liked individual in this House, still very active in his political life. I see him at many different events. David Peterson, of course, was the Liberal Premier, Bob Rae was the NDP Premier, and now Mike Harris. Mike came in in 1981, along with Ernie, as at least two of the members coming in, among other members.

1420

It has indeed been an interesting time. We've seen many changes, all of us, particularly Norm and I and the members who were here when we arrived. Floyd Laughren is the dean of the House, as you would know, having been elected in 1971, and Bud Wildman and Sean Conway in 1975.

One of the things I think we all notice is how kind and understanding and helpful members are when we arrive in this assembly, because we are new to the place and there is a lot to learn. I remember Jack Spence left and he said to me — Jack Spence was a member from south-western Ontario and Kent county. He said: "Remember, Jim, that there are more people who talk themselves out of this place than talk themselves into this place." As you can see, I have certainly followed that over the years and kept my remarks very brief on all occasions.

I have met so many nice people over the years. You see them in all the political parties. The public sees confrontation, particularly during question period and other times. The members of the news media ask us for our opinions in the hallways. We give them and we provide our point of view from an individual's point of view and a party's point of view. Those views often clash. I think what the public doesn't see and perhaps should see is that there are many individuals in this House who have very strong friendships, that we have respect for one another.

What we debate and where we differ is on ideas and policies and legislation and regulations, but not as individuals, not as people. I have grown to respect everyone in this House who has served. I have a great admiration for people who will put their name on the line. There are a lot of people out there who we all meet who have opinions, who have suggestions, who have criticism. Not all of them are prepared to put their name on the ballot, to allow their name to stand for public office.

Even when I disagree vehemently with anyone in this House, now or in the past I have disagreed from time to time as well, I have a great respect for those individuals who are prepared to run for election, to serve the people out there, because it isn't always an easy job. It's an exciting job, it's an exceedingly interesting job, but it's a job full of pressure.

Until you've served on the government side — I serve on the opposition side — you don't understand the pressure under which the Premier and members of the cabinet and others find themselves. Perhaps it gives one a better perspective, having served on both sides of the House, and I am certainly hopeful that many of the government members who were elected in this past election will have that opportunity to some day, somewhere along the way, view both sides of the House.

The members I have met — and I am sure Norm would say the same — have been by and large and overwhelmingly very dedicated, very hard-working and

very committed individuals. I hear today, more so in 1997 than when we came in in 1977, remarks which are directed against people who serve in public office. Yes, we're supposed to accept that criticism. That's part of the job and it was said by Harry Truman, "If you don't like the heat, stay out of the kitchen."

But I think there is some unfair criticism directed towards politicians at large, because my observation has been that the people who serve in this House in all parties and people who serve in the federal Parliament and at local levels are by and large good people, dedicated people, hard-working people who are prepared to serve the people in their own communities.

I have been privileged to serve the people of St Catharines. I have learned that we should take our responsibilities seriously and not ourselves seriously. If we do that, it certainly gives us a better perspective on the jobs that we have.

In this chamber, as Norm and I have noted, we debate ferociously on some occasions the issues that come before us, but we hope ultimately from the debate in this House and from our service that the people of Ontario and our own constituencies will be the beneficiaries of that debate and that discussion and those initiatives and those ideas.

To my friend Norm Sterling, I offer my congratulations. Norm and I have been good friends over the years, though heaven knows our views on a number of issues are quite far apart, except I must say I did agree with him when he wanted to abolish the penny, and I think that did pass in this Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: It didn't pass. Well, that just shows you, Norm, that I was not as alert as I might have been that day. But Norm wanted to abolish the penny because it was such a nuisance to so many. That was just one initiative and he did it with good humour on that day. But he is responsible for a number of other initiatives alluded to by my friend Mr Conway; I think of living wills, freedom of information and his definite commitment to that, and naturally he and I sharing a commitment to the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

To all who have expressed through your applause your kindness and your thoughtfulness to me today, particularly Ernie Eves, Sean Conway and Bud Wildman, I thank you very much, and I hope I will be able to serve the people of St Catharines and Ontario for some period to come.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I shall be brief, never short. I don't know how many times I've used that joke in the last 20 years. That's not much speaking after Jim Bradley, I must say.

It's indeed an honour to have represented people for the length of time I have in eastern Ontario. I have had many, many people I owe loyalty to in my constituency, in my family and among my friends.

One of the people I would like to, however, recognize is my constituency assistant, who has been with me for some 15 or 16 years of the 20 years I have been a member. Doris Seabrook has acted as a member. I hope she never enters politics in opposing me, because I don't think there would be much choice for the electorate.

Mr Eves said you can fool all the people all of the time. I am much more attuned to what Abe Lincoln said: "You can't fool all the people all of the time; all you need is a majority."

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sterling: That coming from Landslide Ernie.

I have, over a period of time, followed the principles of a very strong woman, my mom, Doris Sterling, who raised a family of four kids on her own because of the untimely death of my dad when I was only two years of age. My mom taught me some of what I consider are eastern Ontario principles, which I believe are as sound as the Canadian Shield, on which eastern Ontario finds itself. She taught me about fairness, equity and hard work.

Most of all my mom, in spite of the fact that she took care of a family of four on her own and never had to turn to the state for assistance, notwithstanding that, gave back to her community like you wouldn't believe. She took time and effort all the time to help people within her church and outside her church, notwithstanding that she had four young people in her home to take care of. I have admired her. She is still alive. Yesterday she celebrated her 88th birthday. She is independent and as smart as she was when she raised me as a young boy.

It's people like that and people like my son, Ian, and my daughter, Sara, and my partner and spouse, Joanie, who have give me the determination and the will to carry on in this place. I have enjoyed it.

As Jim said, there is no more exciting life than being a member of this Legislature. I believe you can accomplish things here. You have to try hard, you have to focus. In addition to some of the things that have been mentioned, perhaps one of my proudest forays was in the opposition when I brought forward six or seven private member's bills to control smoking in the workplace and in public places. I believe the government acted in response to my leadership in those areas.

When I leave this place, either voluntarily or involuntarily — and I'm not planning to do that. In 1977, when I ran for nomination in the riding of Carleton-Grenville and later in 1987 became the member for Carleton, I had fire in my belly to change things. I believe I still have that fire left.

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I am in essence a small-r reformer; I am a big-c Conservative. Notwithstanding that, I look forward to the future in terms of making changes here. I'm proud to be a member of this government, which has attacked some of the problems I saw were not addressed over the last 18 years prior to our getting into government.

I believe this will be a way of government in the future notwithstanding which party sits on this side of the Legislature. It will be necessary for us to respond more quickly to societal change, to economic change. We will have to make this institution run in a more efficient way in order to allow the governing party to do those kinds of things.

Over the past 20 years I have attempted not only to put forward my party's position and what I believed was right, but also to defend this institution. I think each and every member of this House owes a responsibility not

only to their constituents and to their party, but also owes a significant responsibility to this institution.

Lastly, as a parting shot, notwithstanding some of the things I might have done which I considered more important, the thing I will probably be remembered for most of all was that I was the guy who put beer on the golf courses.

The Speaker: I'll be certain to get those transcripts sent to the families of the members. What they do with them —

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. In September of last year your government awarded a \$28-million highway maintenance contract to a company by the name of IMOS. What's notable here is that one of the people involved in making that selection was an assistant deputy minister who at the same time was applying for a high-level job with that very same company, namely, IMOS. As it turned out, not only did IMOS get the contract but this ADM got his job.

You said that privatization would be a good thing because it would be in the public interest. I want you to tell me, Premier, how is it in the public interest for this kind of blatant conflict of interest to take place? Second, how can you expect Ontarians to believe we got the best possible deal in this case?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Chair of Management Board has some information on this.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I'm not going to name names, and the member opposite hasn't named names, but there has been a review by Management Board and there has been a determination that there has been a violation of the Public Service Act. But the same study concluded that there were no improprieties, no wrongdoings; indeed the private sector firm that was brought in to monitor this whole process to ensure fairness has indicated that the process was a fair one, that it was applied effectively, that the recommendations were fair and that the taxpayers did receive benefit.

Mr McGuinty: I can appreciate the minister's assurances, but they're not good enough. I think the facts here are very important. This man involved, this ADM, was one of only three people who made the decision as to who would get this contract. He was one of only three people who had a very good idea what the government was expecting in terms of dollars for this contract.

IMOS, the successful bidder, came within only 3% of the exact price the government was prepared to pay. The other two bids were several million dollars off the mark. The real kicker, of course, was that the ADM got a job; in fact he resigned the very same day the contract was awarded.

What we need to know, notwithstanding the minister's good and genuine assurances, is, how did this happen, what do we have to do to make sure it doesn't happen

again, and do we know if we got the best possible price in the circumstances? There's only one way we can get those answers, and that is through a full public inquiry. Minister, will we get that?

Hon David Johnson: If the member opposite is interested in how things happen, things happened because there was a process in place. His government was in place between 1985 and 1990 and the NDP was in office between 1990 and 1995; there was a process in place, and the process was not good enough.

We are the government — we came into office in 1995 — and this government has put into place a stronger conflict-of-interest policy/guideline/procedure. In addition, this government has put into effect lobbyist registration. This government is concerned about the perception that government be open, fair and honest. That's why recently, in April of this year, we brought in conflict-of-interest guidelines and announced the lobbyist registration process.

Mr McGuinty: You've been talking about those guidelines for quite some time. They have done nothing to prevent this from happening.

We have some very real concerns about privatization and what it's going to mean for Ontario, and this is an excellent test case. Somebody involved in the selection of the bid benefited from the result. This case stinks. We need an inquiry. The minister, notwithstanding those genuine, I'm sure, assurances, doesn't seem to understand, doesn't get it.

We've got to have an inquiry to find out how this happened in the first place, and I'm sure it is in the public interest for us to do that; we've got to find out how we can make sure this does not happen again, and that too surely is in the public interest; and finally, we've got to find out whether we got the best value for the amount awarded in connection with this contract. That is why we need a full public inquiry. Minister, will you give us that?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite may wish to be a bit careful in indicating that any particular individual has benefited from this process. If the member has evidence, then let's have it, because there has been an investigation into this situation and the investigation has indicated absolutely no wrongdoing, no improprieties. If the member opposite has information, I for one would like to have that information.

This situation, this process the member is alluding to, happened last September. The procedures that were in place were carried over from the Liberal and NDP governments. Today, as of April of this year, we have announced new conflict-of-interest processes, we have announced a lobbyist registration policy. I'm confident that those announcements will ensure that the taxpayers get the best value for their dollar and that the taxpayers will be assured that there's an open, honest and fair process.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is for the Premier. Premier, during the course of the campaign and within the Common

Sense Revolution document itself, you promised there would be no new user fees. We are all quite aware that you have imposed upon seniors in this province a \$100 user fee for their drugs, plus dispensing fees. We understand as well that this kicks in when you earn \$16,000 or more.

Last July 15, you said you were going to charge \$100 annual fee. Now, you tell me if this is true: I hear that effective April 1 of this year you're going to charge another \$100, so you are shortchanging our seniors to the tune of three and a half months. Tell me, Premier, that this is not true, that I have misheard, that this is not correct, that you are not about to pick the pockets of our seniors for three and a half months' worth of user fees.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Minister of Health will respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I don't know where the honourable member gets this three-and-a-half-month bit, but when I made the announcement in this House on behalf of the government I made two things clear: that in the first year the \$100 would be set as the program is today and that we would work towards bringing the system in to prorate the \$100, which is what we're going to do this year. So we're fully living up to our commitment.

I remind the honourable member that it is absolutely the lowest copayment by far in Canada; that with that money we have added 460 new drugs to the formulary, which is in contrast to the previous government that delisted over 250 drugs; and that all the money and more is being spent on the drug program because we also were able to lower the deductible for the working poor by improving the Trillium drug program.

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Mr McGuinty: Minister, your Premier said, "No new user fees." The fact that it happens to be smaller in relation to what other provinces are charging is really not relevant and you know that. Now, as to this issue of three and a half months, talk to seniors around the province. Don't hide from them. They will tell you that it is their clear understanding that the 100 bucks ripoff fee was for 12 full months. Now all of a sudden you say, "No, no. The new \$100 is going to kick in effective April 1."

That generates \$30 million more for you. Tell me, has this obsessive interest in the tax cut driven you to such depths that you're going to steal \$30 million from Ontario seniors, when you told them that it was supposed to last for the full 12 months?

Hon Mr Wilson: Most seniors in this province — and I spoke to the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, for example, recently — very much understand the copayment. It is obviously —

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): They are happy about this, eh, Jim?

Hon Mr Wilson: The pharmacists are the front line. Over 20,000 pharmacies, with the exception of one press conference in the last year by a handful of people, were not receiving complaints.

I remind people that in Saskatchewan the copayment is \$600 every six months and it goes slightly down from there in every other province. Nobody is at the \$2 or the

\$6.11. All of that money and more has gone into new drugs for seniors and into expanding the Trillium drug plan so that 140,000 more working poor families can receive help with their catastrophic drugs.

I would also remind the honourable member that the words "user fee" do not apply. It is his government in Ottawa that defines that term —

Mr Agostino: Say you are sorry to the seniors.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Seven thousand new clients to deal with, Jim. What a mess.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Hamilton East, you are out of order. Member for Lake Nipigon. Member for Yorkview, you are completely out of order as well.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You're out of order on two counts. That makes it complete. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: The minister can try as he might, and so can the Premier, but they cannot wriggle themselves off this hook. The facts are very clear. First of all, the Premier said, "No new user fees." Second, seniors in this province were told, to add insult to that injury they were about to experience in terms of a \$100 user fee, that it would last for 12 months. Now they've been told: "No, no. It was a mistake. It's only going to last until April 1." They're being short-changed by three and a half months.

Is that what we've come to in this province? We're going to pick the pockets of our parents. We're going to pick the pockets of seniors to the tune of \$30 million in order to deliver on the tax cut. Really, is it worth it, Minister? Is it really worth it? Do the right thing. Tell seniors you're not going to proceed with this and you're going to reimburse them.

Hon Mr Wilson: We are reviewing our options to prorogue the fee. We said we would do that, particularly —

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): Do it now; do it today.

Hon Mr Wilson: No. It's exactly what I announced in this House. Again I remind the honourable member that it is not a user fee. It is his government in Ottawa that decides what a user fee is and what it isn't, and every other province and jurisdiction has a copayment.

I think the honourable member is completely out of touch with seniors. Most seniors say to us, "We're happy to pay our little bit as long as it goes into improving the plan and," with the true generosity of Ontarians, "as long as it goes into helping people who need help." The honourable member knows in his heart of hearts that all of that money, and more, has gone into improving the Trillium drug plan, which is like no other plan in Canada, for the working poor. I am not meeting the seniors that you apparently are meeting, or you're responding to one press conference.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: Most seniors in this province are very generous. They want the money to go back into health care, which is where the money is going, and they want to help their friends and neighbours, and that —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question; leader of the third party.

NATIONAL UNITY UNITÉ NATIONALE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Premier: Following the federal election, you told reporters that a merger of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Reform Party was a good idea. You said, "I gave my view a couple of years ago that I thought it was in the interests of the parties to see if they could not come together." Jean Charest, who I think is your federal leader, says such a merger would be impossible. He says, "Reform leader Preston Manning clearly stated where he stood in regards to a number of values that I cannot and will not compromise on."

My question to you is, which side are you on? Are you with Mr Charest, who seeks accommodation with Quebec, or are you with Preston Manning, who tried to win seats in the federal election by attacking Quebec? Which side are you on?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I of course am on the side of Ontarians and am prepared to work with the new Prime Minister. Now, post-election, I am preparing to work with the re-elected Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. He is my Prime Minister. He is the Prime Minister of Canada. He is the Prime Minister of Ontario. I am spending my time both working with him and my new-found friendship with Bob Rae, on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Sudbury, come to order. Member for Dufferin-Peel, that's a pathetic demonstration, but it's still a demonstration.

Mr Hampton: I wish it were as simple as the Premier tries to make out. The fact is that the Reform position, as stated by Preston Manning, is that all the provinces are the same, that there is nothing unique or distinct about Quebec's history, culture or language. I think Ontarians rejected that view in the election. I think they rejected it because they find it very divisive, because they find it quite unproductive and because it takes us down a road that I don't think any of us wants to go down.

Traditionally, Ontario has helped to build a bridge to Quebec. Ontario has helped to find accommodation for Quebec. Is your government going to reflect the obvious views of the citizens of Ontario and build a bridge, or are you going to echo the views of Preston Manning and attack Quebec?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know why the member wishes to indulge in the federal election and federal campaign —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton East, I'm warning you. If I have to warn you again, I'll name you. Other members — Windsor-Walkerville, come to order as well, please.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Stand up and be counted.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-Walkerville, I am now warning you as well. Come to order.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm not sure why the member wants to rehash the federal election, but I am very happy to

take the time in question period to do so. The premise, though, of your question is entirely wrong.

The message that came through loud and clear from the voters in Ontario was that 89% said, "We want less government, we want less bureaucracy, we want to balance the budget and we want tax cuts." Three parties, the Liberal Party, the Reform Party, and the PC Party, said all of those things, and 89% of Ontarians said: "Yes, we want to balance the books, we want tax cuts, we want less government, we want to downsize the size and cost of government. We're with Mike Harris. We're with Bob Rae." You're with the 11%.

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M. Hampton : C'est incroyable. C'est une question très importante pour le Canada et aussi pour l'Ontario, et M. le premier ministre de l'Ontario a dit que c'est seulement une question d'impôts. Monsieur le premier ministre, l'Ontario a traditionnellement joué un rôle de réconciliation dans le débat constitutionnel. Ce rôle a mérité à l'Ontario un certain respect de la part de tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes, y compris les Québécois.

En effet, les Canadiens et Canadiennes s'attendent à ce genre d'intervention de la part de l'Ontario. Votre fascination pour les réformistes et leur politique qui divise les Canadiens et Canadiennes, ne menace-t-elle pas votre capacité de jouer ce rôle conciliateur ?

Hon Mr Harris: I think my views on the campaign were very clear. I supported no leader and no party in the federal election, so the premise of your question is absolute nonsense and silliness. Second, if you want the facts of what Ontarians voted on, they voted for tax cuts, they voted for a balanced budget, they voted for less government and they voted overwhelmingly 89% that way.

If you have a question on my views on Ontario's role in Confederation, this Premier and this cabinet and this caucus and this government will continue to play the most conciliatory of as roles we have always played, as I played through Meech Lake, when unfortunately the Prime Minister didn't support it but Mike Harris did, this party did, this Legislature did; Charlottetown, again, leading the way on behalf of Ontario and on behalf of Quebec and on behalf of Canada, and once again this Premier and this caucus and this cabinet, and I would hope this Legislature in a very —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. New question.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Another question to the Premier: My question concerns conflicts of interest in his government. Richard Brennan's story in the weekend paper shows that your privatization of road maintenance in southwestern Ontario has led to a serious conflict-of-interest problem. Your own internal investigation found that former senior bureaucrat Carl Vervoort was part of the panel that awarded the road maintenance contract to IMOS, a Thornhill company. But immediately following the awarding of the contract, Mr Vervoort then turned around and virtually overnight became an employee of the company he helped negotiate a contract with. Your government is privatizing everything from mail room services to water-testing labs to the cleaning

service for government buildings. The public needs to know that the Carl Vervoort episode won't be repeated.

Will you do two things, Premier: make your investigation of the IMOS contract public and launch a similar investigation into all your other privatizations to ensure that the taxpayer interest is being protected?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the question has already been asked and answered.

Mr Hampton: We've asked three questions on this issue now. We had two situations last week where people who worked in the public service either negotiated or helped to negotiate very attractive contracts for private sector companies and then, as soon as the contract was in place, went over to the private sector company. Who in your government is looking out for the taxpayers' interest? Who is looking out for the public interest? Who is going to ensure that some of these people, when they go over to the other side, don't make a lot of money at taxpayers' expense? Who is going to protect the public interest? Your House leader promised legislation to do that, but we don't see it. Premier, when are we going to see something that protects the taxpayers instead of your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Harris: The answer to "who" is the Chair of Management Board, better than any government has in my time here, which is just 16 years, not 20. We will be bringing in new legislation because we have found that that which was left to us by your government was inadequate.

Mr Hampton: I think what I heard from the Premier is that this is inappropriate. We brought two examples to you last week. Here's another example. It would seem to me that if you're interested in protecting the taxpayers' interest, if you're interested in protecting the public interest, you'd want to bring this legislation in and you'd want to pass it through the House before you proceed with any more privatizations, before you give any more opportunities for fat contracts.

Why isn't this legislation before the House now? Why aren't we dealing with this legislation before more people take advantage of these privatization boondoggles, before more people take advantage of their insider knowledge because they've worked on your political staff or they've worked in your public service and then they go out and get a job in the private sector after having negotiated the contract with the private sector? Why don't we see the legislation first?

Hon Mr Harris: You've seen the statement of intent from the government. Those principles of I believe April 21 are in effect. They're in effect now. They are in practice. We are telling everybody they must follow them. We cannot deal with those things that took place before, under the old rules you had, save and except to make sure that your rules were complied with and follow up those investigations.

You talk about all the examples you bring up. The problem is, you bring up examples without checking very many of the facts. I would have thought that today, instead of repeating the allegation you made last week, you might have wanted to correct the record on the allegation you made concerning Domenic Alfieri, who sent you a letter, copied to me, saying in conclusion, "I do not work

for Navegante, I have received no remuneration from Navegante, and I doubt Navegante needs my advice." You pull this silly stuff out of the air and you treat it around here like it's fact, and half the time it's not true.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Mr Premier, you can't accuse a member of not telling the truth in the Legislature. You must withdraw.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm sorry. We had an inaccurate statement. I invite the member now to correct the record as Mr Alfieri would like.

The Speaker: I don't need an explanation. I just need a withdrawal.

Hon Mr Harris: I withdrew. Now I'm asking for unanimous consent —

The Speaker: Mr Premier, I appreciate the fact, but I'm not here to debate it. It's just a withdrawal.

New question; official opposition.

Hon Mr Harris: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I have here a copy of a letter from Mr Alfieri correcting the record in the public domain, but it has not been corrected in the Legislature. As only the member can do that, I would invite him and ask unanimous consent that he do so.

The Speaker: First let me deal with the unanimous consent. The Premier has asked for unanimous consent so the leader of the third party can correct the perceived incorrect record of the Premier. Agreed? Agreed. Go ahead.

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Mr Hampton: The Premier knows this. You might want to read that letter rather carefully, Premier. I can tell a letter when it's been written by a lawyer, and I searched that letter in vain —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Government members, I remind you that it was your request to give him unanimous consent to correct the record as he sees fit. You have to allow him the opportunity to do just that.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Well, we are.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We're listening.

The Speaker: Order. I'm not debating it. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I know some of the government members don't want to get into that. Premier, if you look at that letter — I searched for the words that said, "There is no relationship now nor has there been a relationship between Mr Alfieri and the company in question." Nowhere could I find those words. I found words that sort of tried to slide by that, I found words that almost get there, but nowhere could I find those words, Premier. The fact still remains the facts speak for themselves on many of these cases, and your government is not standing up for the public interest.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns the kidney dialysis problem we've got in eastern Ontario, a problem that according to the Kidney Foundation of Canada is

getting worse, not better. Minister, for weeks and months now people like my colleague Mr Cleary from Cornwall, myself and scores of other people, have been telling you and your department that all across eastern Ontario, from Deep River to Bancroft, Belleville, Tweed, Cornwall, Perth and Hawkesbury, there is a growing problem with the difficulty of kidney dialysis services.

Your privatization scheme went amok and scores of innocent kidney dialysis patients are being held hostage to that bad fortune. Minister, what are you going to do to relieve the burden that is falling so unfairly on these men and women from all across eastern Ontario who so desperately need the expanded services they're not now getting?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): It was this member who encouraged the government many months ago to cancel the request for proposal.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes; I could read back the Hansards.

This whole matter now is before the courts and I can't comment on that action other than to say that this government has put 36 million new dollars into dialysis over the last 18 months. We have opened new clinics across the province and we eagerly await the court's ruling on this issue so we can get new clinics or expanded clinics up and running in eastern Ontario.

Mr Conway: Just so there is no confusion, you cooked a deal indirectly with National Medical Care of Boston to expand regional kidney dialysis services through part of eastern Ontario. Yes, Lyn McLeod and Sean Conway pointed out that the New York Times had reported that in five states of the American union National Medical was under indictment for, among other things, pumping poison into the systems, into the bodies of innocent people. We pointed that out in the public interest.

My supplementary question is very specific: In Renfrew and in Belleville, those particular venues had nothing to do with the problem case in Ottawa. So my question for you today is: Since Renfrew and Belleville are no part of the National Medical court case in Ottawa, why can't you relieve the problem in Renfrew and Belleville? Are you prepared to do that in those two locations?

Hon Mr Wilson: The court has ruled in this case — and it's on appeal — that everything across eastern Ontario is on hold. I agree with the honourable member that's very unfortunate. We have the money. We're very eager to move forward.

I will say to the honourable member that I didn't cook anything. I had nothing to do with the awarding of these contracts. A special committee made up of people from the Kidney Foundation, the nephrologists, the kidney specialists themselves — in fact, in most of the province all those contracts went out at highest quality, best price. Hospitals won a number of them; private clinics run by nurses are running a number of those clinics across the province.

It's going very well throughout the province, except for the legal challenge in eastern Ontario. As soon as the courts have dealt with this matter, we will hopefully be in a position to move forward and put those services in place for the people who need them.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Premier. Last week we saw clearly in the House how desperate your government is to deflect attention away from your botched downloading on to municipalities, deflect attention away from the hospitals you're closing and deflect attention away from the money you're going to take out of school classrooms. You've decided to pick a fight with the women and men across this province who deliver a number of public services.

It's clear you're hoping to force them to pay for your cuts to hospitals, your cuts to classrooms and your cuts to municipalities. But it's also clear you're hoping to deflect attention away from your agenda; you're hoping to put the attention on them rather than on your agenda. Premier, do you not understand that you're giving them no choice but to fight back against your government? You're giving them no choice whatsoever. Don't you understand that?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We are quite happy to have attention on our agenda, just as 89% of Ontarians voted for less government, more efficient delivery of services, a balanced budget and tax cuts. We are quite happy to have you talk about it. We're happy to have the focus on work for welfare, on changing attitudes, on jobs. A thousand jobs a day have been created over the last three months, far in excess of anybody's expectations.

We are quite comfortable focusing on the Common Sense Revolution, on what we campaigned on, on keeping our promises, on our agenda and on the results — excellence in education, the latest in health care, jobs for Ontarians. That's our agenda and I'm happy that you invite me to talk about it more.

Mr Hampton: This is the Premier who said there would be no hospital closures under his government. This is the Premier who said there would be no new tax increases, and we see user fees breaking out everywhere. This is the Premier who said there would be no cuts to classrooms, but we're seeing those everywhere.

The bill you launched last week doesn't just attack labour legislation; it rolls back pay equity rights for women, their attempt to get fair pay and equal pay; it attacks the wage protection plan and takes \$25 million out of the pockets of workers who have been laid off because of a corporate bankruptcy or a corporate closure. Your plan isn't about stability or transition or any of those things; your plan is about attacking working people across this province, to get them to pay for your cuts to health care, your closures of hospitals, your cuts to classrooms, your cuts to municipalities. That's what it's all about.

Premier, this is unfair. It's unfair that while you give your corporate friends tax breaks you're attacking the wages of working people across this province. Don't you understand that?

Hon Mr Harris: Our agenda, including the legislation introduced last week, first-contract legislation that exists in this province for the benefit of unions negotiating a first contract, is now extended to provide for smooth first-contract legislation, protection both for unions and unionized workers and for employers; making sure we

have a first-class education system, better, we hope, than we have today, because good is not good enough in today's economy; first-class health care services, better than we have today, because as good as our health care system is — it is one of the best in the world — it needs to be better, we believe, in the future; first-class municipal services, because as good as they are today, we believe they need to be better in the future.

This is to provide protection for services for people, to provide protection for those unionized workers, a coming together of many different locals and different unions with some of the changes that are taking place, and to do so in an organized, systematic way. It will be supported, I hope, at least by the New Democratic Party, if not —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

1510

JUSTICE SYSTEM IN BRUCE

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): My question this afternoon is for the Attorney General. Minister, I understand through a recent article in an Owen Sound newspaper that Brian Farmer, the crown attorney for Walkerton, has been transferred to London. My constituents are wondering whether there will be a replacement for Mr Farmer and whether there's been a decision by your office to continue with these services in our community.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Bruce for the question. I can assure her that the level of service to the community will remain the same in Walkerton. There are no plans to change the Bruce county crown attorney's office. Currently, we have a senior assistant crown attorney from another area acting as the senior crown counsel. The operations of the office have not changed, and a competition for a permanent posting for a senior crown counsel will commence shortly.

Mrs Fisher: Thank you, Minister. I am sure you know that the people of Bruce are very happy about that, but they also have a concern with regard to the courthouse. I wonder if you could inform us whether or not there is any intention of closing the courthouse in Walkerton.

Hon Mr Harnick: I also want to assure the member for Bruce that there are no plans to close the courthouse in Walkerton. The ministry is currently investing in major renovations at that courthouse in Walkerton to provide even better service to members of the community. There are plans to renovate the courthouse to accommodate a second courtroom and a larger motions room at that location. There are certainly no plans to close the Walkerton courthouse.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. As summer is approaching, Ontarians, particularly seniors, people who have health problems and children, are concerned about the unacceptable level of air pollution and smog in this province and the health effects it's having on Ontarians.

Last year in Metro 380 people a year, on average, died prematurely as a result of bad air quality. In Hamilton-Wentworth a report last week showed that 130 people a

year die prematurely; 300 people a year are hospitalized as a direct result of air pollution, contaminants and smog in the air. Your own minister, Norm Sterling, said that 1,800 Ontarians die prematurely every year due to poor air quality.

There is one way you can help, and that is a vehicle emission testing program. Your government on at least 25 occasions in the past two years has come forward and said that they're going to introduce a vehicle emission testing program. Premier, how many more people have to die before you start to act and bring in the types of programs that are necessary to cut air pollution in this province and save people's lives?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the member's interest in the whole area, and I say this not trying to suggest that we ought not to; we are, and the minister is working on this. I don't know if you've worked with him. I know the Hamilton Spectator suggests you work more cooperatively with our minister in these areas of mutual concern. But I know he had to leave today and he would welcome your input in helping us facilitate that, getting it finalized and on the public agenda. But it is our intention to have that in place as soon as possible.

Also I would hope that the Deputy Prime Minister, if she is still to be after tomorrow — we could make the call later today. We have today and tomorrow, perhaps. It's something that we think should be worked on nationally and it has been brought up by the minister, I believe, to try to have national standards. But in the absence of that, we are prepared to go it alone.

Mr Agostino: I appreciate the Premier's concern with the Deputy Prime Minister, but I'd rather deal with the health effects your policies are having on the people of Ontario.

Time and time again we have seen real evidence here. This is not a partisan issue. This is involving people's lives. This involves children, seniors and people who have health problems in this province. In the last two months, and it's not warm summer weather yet, there have been over 20 occasions in Hamilton and Toronto where pollution standards have exceeded the limit; that's once every three days in the months of April and May. Last year in Toronto, on five days there were smog alerts. That meant people with health effects — seniors, children, people with asthma — could not go outdoors.

It is unacceptable, and what have you done, Premier? You have cut 39% of the air monitoring stations across Ontario since you took office, the very equipment necessary to monitor those problems.

We have a crisis with air quality in this province, Premier. I will ask you, will you commit today to appointing an independent commission to study the air quality problem in Ontario and bring forward recommendations we can act upon to avert what is coming to be a crisis in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: We have done a lot but not enough. There is still more to do. I know the minister has made a commitment that if we can't get national standards, we will move on our own anyway.

In June 1996, we released Towards a Smog Plan for Ontario, the proposed 20-year emission reduction targets.

The minister travelled and met about a month ago with 11 officials in 11 US states to pursue a cooperative action that way. The gasoline volatility regulation 271 was amended to require gasoline refiners and blenders to reduce smog-causing fumes. Tighter standards were released for PM10 inhalable particulates. I think that was the area where the Hamilton Spectator suggested you work more cooperatively with the minister.

We recognize that vehicles are southern Ontario's single largest source of pollutants which lead to smog. Where the pilot project started by the NDP is over, we accept the results. We're working on a program that will make sense for Ontario, and I invite you to be part of the minister's advisory committee and make sure it works in Hamilton.

INVESTIGATIONS INTO POLICE SHOOTINGS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question of the Solicitor General. Later today, your Bill 105 is going to receive its final consideration in the Legislature. You give chiefs of police far more control over police complaints and you turn the clock back by over a decade on civilian oversight. While you did this, you refused to deal with the most urgent issue that's been facing us, namely, making sure that police officers cooperate with the special investigations units as they investigate police shootings. This is your last chance, at least with respect to Bill 105. Why have you refused to take action concerning duty to cooperate so that we can make sure the truth comes out when a civilian is shot by police officers?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I have indicated that in some areas of the province duty to cooperate has been an issue, but more broadly speaking, I think we have had very significant and extensive cooperation of police officers with the SIU during investigations.

I've indicated on a number of occasions my willingness to explore the feasibility and possibility of looking at the protocol which establishes the relationship between the SIU and police and the issues of a witness officer and a subject officer. It's certainly my intent to continue to pursue that.

I indicated as well to the member that I've discussed with some police stakeholders as well the possibility of reviewing the code of conduct which is set through regulation under the Police Services Act, which can again give us an opportunity to spell out the responsibilities and duties of witness and subject officers.

Mr Kormos: During the course of drafting Bill 105 you didn't consult with the community that has expressed great concern about the shootings and the failure of there being any enforcement of the duty to cooperate.

You knew very well that there was a festering problem surrounding the inability of the SIU to get full and timely information from police officers after a shooting. You know that we introduced an amendment to Bill 105 that attempted to address and clarify the officer's duty to cooperate.

Will you please commit now to ensuring that the community of citizens who have expressed great concern about the ineffectiveness of section 113 and who have

attempted to meet with you in the past regarding Bill 105 will be consulted in the course of developing a new protocol, new regulations or amendments to Bill 105 or to the Police Services Act?

Hon Mr Runciman: I'm glad to give the honourable member my assurance that any individual, group or organization that wishes to be consulted and has a view to express with respect to this issue — I want to assure the member and those individuals and organizations that we will have extensive consultation if we indeed proceed with this, and certainly that's the intent. We have a number of hurdles to overcome before we can establish a review, but certainly that's my intention. I'm very optimistic that we can do something this summer. There will be extensive consultation, and everyone who has a view will have an opportunity to be heard.

1520

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you are well aware, with this government road and highway safety are paramount. Under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Transportation, your ministry, last year was the first year of the Road Safety Challenge. Last week the community of Oshawa participated in the challenge to make our community's roads safer. The success of the challenge was greatly due to strong community commitment. Minister, could you outline what is involved in the Road Safety Challenge for any community?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank the member for Oshawa for the question. The second annual Road Safety Challenge, which wrapped up this past weekend, is an excellent example of how people can work together in helping make Ontario's roads safer. Some 13 communities from across Ontario competed in the event from June 1 to June 8 to see which community had the lowest number of reportable highway traffic collisions per capita.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): We like the answer; how about the question?

Hon Mr Palladini: I think the member for Kingston and The Islands might be interested in the answer, because next year I would like his community to participate. I would like to ask his community to participate.

Mr Gerretsen: We have every year.

Hon Mr Palladini: I have been saying all along that government alone cannot ensure safety on our roads. By bringing road safety down to an individual level, a community can raise awareness about this important subject. Each community had its own road safety injury prevention team, planned a number of road-safety-related activities and encouraged local citizens and businesses —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr Ouellette: Oshawa's Road Safety Challenge initiative included the promotion of Child Safety Seat and Seatbelt Safety Day; Seniors and Pedestrian Safety Day; and Arrive Alive, Don't Drink and Drive. While the Road Safety Challenge itself lasted only a week, activities such as these, with the strong community participation they

involve, contribute to safer communities. My constituents would like to know who exactly won the Road Safety Challenge and what future plans exist for involving more communities in this challenge in the future.

Hon Mr Palladini: I'm very pleased to see that the member for Oshawa has encouraged his own community to participate in the Road Safety Challenge. I would like to inform the member and all members in this House about community participation in this year's challenge. All relevant data are being collected as we speak. The winner will be announced early next week. I'm also pleased to announce that prizes will be awarded to mayors and chiefs of police for the top five cities. These prizes will recognize their efforts to reduce collisions and improve road safety.

I'm very pleased to report that a lot of other communities throughout the province have actually contacted MTO about this year's event and would like to participate in next year's event. I would like to ask every member in this House to speak to your community. Maybe we can get all Ontarians to participate in this project.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, over a month ago I made a statement in the House and sent you a letter regarding two very young constituents of mine, Peter-Justin and Avery Navratil. These small children, aged two and a half years and eight months old, suffer from a very rare skin disease known as xeroderma pigmentosum, which renders them highly sensitive to ultraviolet rays. These children are unable to go outside during the day as their skin will burn terribly with any exposure at all. It's so serious they need protection from light indoors.

To control their exposure to light, they need a light meter, a very expensive but necessary device that just might save their lives. We've learned these devices are not presently covered under the assistive devices program, although the mandate of this program is to provide such devices to Ontarians with long-term disabilities.

Minister, I've since sent you another letter recently regarding Peter-Justin and Avery, and you've not favoured me with a response. Surely you agree that we need to find the resources to help protect these highly vulnerable children. What can you tell me, the Navratil family and all the people in Thunder Bay who are concerned about the Navratil children today? How can you help them?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I've asked ministry staff to review the particular request the honourable member did bring to my attention. I will undertake after question period to find out if we are able to extend some extraordinary assistance; and I stress extraordinary. We have not paid for light meters or other things — no government has — even though the assistive devices program is by far the most generous program in Canada and indeed covers far more medical devices than any other jurisdiction in Canada, in fact in North America, in a publicly funded system. I am doing what I can for the honourable member and I will be sure to get back to him with a final determination in the near future.

Mr Gravelle: If I can just help you and your officials too, I think it's important to point this is an extremely rare condition. I believe there are only two children in the province who suffer from this, only five documented in Canada, fewer than 1,000 worldwide. Obviously, you as the health minister have a responsibility to provide that protection, so I appreciate what you're saying.

It would be very helpful indeed if you or someone on your staff or a ministry official could contact the Navratils directly. They are very upset about this problem, very concerned. It would be helpful if you could have someone contact them, and I would appreciate it if you would ask your officials to do that.

Hon Mr Wilson: I think that's a very reasonable request, and I would actually be surprised if that hasn't been done, because it is normal to talk to the family. I will endeavour to find out in just a few minutes for the honourable member.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. On Monday, April 28, I asked you a question regarding the adult protective service worker program in Sault Ste Marie and the fact that there was an amalgamation on the move to bring it underneath the umbrella of Community Living Algoma. At that time you very graciously agreed to look into it and also expressed the same concern that some of the people in Sault Ste Marie were expressing re the vulnerability of some of the people served by that organization.

It seems from the press this weekend and from talking to some people in this business that the amalgamation is moving ahead, and the association itself is agreeing that the case management piece of that should move but that the advocacy piece should stay outside their purview. What is your position on this? Have you looked into it, and are you supporting the amalgamation of adult protective service workers under the umbrella of Community Living Algoma?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you for the question. I have asked staff to look into it. If they have not yet got back to the honourable member, I will speak to them and ask why that has not occurred. We know that many communities are undertaking restructuring exercises. It's being driven by the local communities as they attempt to make sure their services are more appropriately planned for those people who need them. If there is a problem that is occurring with this particular restructuring exercise, we can certainly take appropriate action, if required.

Mr Martin: I appreciate that, but this situation has some ramifications that are much broader than just Sault Ste Marie. I refer you to a letter that's in your office now, dated June 2, written by Daniel Casey, chair of the Adult Protective Service Association of Ontario. It says in part:

"Recently I have had the opportunity to speak with David Morrow at developmental services branch" — your ministry. "David and I discussed the proposal of MCSS to begin the accountability framework for developmental

services. Part of the proposal is for the APSW program to act as third parties in the signing of service agreements between individuals and direct service providers. Pilot projects have begun...in Timmins," and other communities. "This will entail APSW programs being housed outside of the direct service provider, and yet the area office in Sault Ste Marie is still planning to move the APSW program to a direct service provider. Does this make fiscal sense when in two to three years the accountability framework will be launched and the program will need to be moved or another program established altogether?"

Hon Mrs Ecker: As the honourable member is making reference to, we are restructuring in local communities. That is starting now. I will certainly have staff look into this to see if the situation has changed since the last time he and I discussed this.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Affairs. In the 1996 business plan, and subsequently, with the passing of Bill 54, the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act in June last year, the government outlined an initiative to move towards self-management for a number of business sectors regulated by your ministry. Could you inform the Legislature of the progress made towards implementing self-management for travel agents?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): The government outlined our intention in Bill 54 to delegate certain responsibilities for administration, enforcement and licensing to non-profit, independent organizations that really will provide a higher level of policing and protection for the consumer. Clearly, what we're trying to do here is self-management.

I might take the opportunity to point out that there's quite a difference between self-management and self-regulation. The government will still retain the responsibilities for policy and regulation; however, we believe that we'll certainly raise the bar and the standards of this by having the industry involved.

The agreement between our ministry and the Travel Industry Council of Ontario was signed on April 29, and it should be up and running by the end of June. Some of the industry members have been appointed already to the board, and the consumer representatives as well. Sue Corke, from the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and the two consumer representatives have experience with the travel industry, as they work on the travel compensation fund, Bruce Fraser, an accountant, and Lillian Morgenthau, from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons.

1530

Mr Chudleigh: The consumer protection area is of course uppermost in the minds of people as they enter the summer season and the travelling that they do. There is some comment being made that by turning over the responsibilities to the private sector, consumer protection will be lowered. Can you inform the House what protec-

tion will be in place to assist consumers in Ontario, especially as they travel out of country and across the oceans?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Once again, I'd like to emphasize we're talking about self-management, not self-regulation. The ministry of course will retain its responsibility for regulation and policy. I might add that in a number of these industries there are associations, whether it's in the real estate industry or the travel industry, and not everyone who operates under those industries belongs to these associations. These associations of course have standards of ethics and some enforcement of discipline within themselves, but not everyone belongs to them.

Now, as a result of these initiatives, everyone will be subject to these new codes of conduct and ethics and will be subject to the enforcement. This has worked well in other provinces. Experience has shown that it has raised the bar. There's been far more responsiveness to the consumer through this self-management initiative.

I would like to share with you that Pauline Mitchell, who is with the Canadian Automobile Association, expressed confidence that industry self-management will maintain consumer protection under the Travel Industry Act. This is a clear message that our ministry, our government and the industry believe that we'll be providing to the consumer a far greater standard of accountability to the consumer.

PETITIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for Sudbury, which promotes smaller class sizes passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, called Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in complete agreement with it.

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have received about 900 signatures from Jarvis, Selkirk, Hagersville and rural areas in my riding on a petition entitled "Stand up for Rural Health Care."

"Whereas there is urgent concern about the future of community hospitals located in Dunnville, Hagersville, Simcoe and Tillsonburg; and

"Whereas distance, weather and doctor shortages are serious barriers to people in rural areas accessing emergency services and health care; and

"Whereas local communities have worked for years to establish, maintain, improve and modernize hospitals, physician and other health services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt a rural health policy to deal with these problems and to protect the health care rights of rural communities, and that hospital boards, district health councils, the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission and the government of Ontario adhere to this rural policy."

I hereby affix my signature to these petitions.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

I have affixed my signature, as I agree with the petition.

WATER CHLORINATION

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): From my town of Milton:

"Whereas the chemical substance chlorine was added to the people of Milton's pure well water supply in 1995; and

"Whereas the Halton region water delivery system in the town of Milton has received the regular maintenance and standard upgrade requirements outlined by the province and is supported by a standby chlorination unit sufficient enough to prevent the spread of a serious bacterial threat; and

"Whereas recent studies on the use of chlorine additives in drinking water have raised the spectre of chlorine as a possible cancer agent; and

"Whereas the people of the town of Milton overwhelmingly supported the belief that a standby chlorination requirement is sufficient enough to prevent the spread of a serious bacterial threat;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government grant the people of Milton's request for a variance allowing only standby chlorination to be used in treating the pure well waters supplying Milton's water delivery system."

It's signed by a number of members from my constituency and I'm pleased to add my name to that list.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which concerns user fees for seniors. It reads as follows:

"Whereas prior to the Mike Harris government's introduction of the Ontario drug benefit plan on July 15, 1996, seniors received all prescription drugs free of charge; and

"Whereas since Premier Mike Harris and Health Minister Jim Wilson launched new fees, seniors have denounced it as a tax on the poor; and

"Whereas seniors who were required to pay the annual deductible of \$100 on July 15 of last year have been made to again pay another \$100 three months prior to the expiry of that year; and

"Whereas many seniors are forced to choose between paying for food, for rent or paying for their prescriptions;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, call upon the Legislative Assembly and the government of Ontario to do the following:

"(1) Direct Premier Mike Harris and the Minister of Health to scrap their user fee on health care and live up to the election promise of no new user fees for health care;

"(2) Refund the deductible overpayment or credit three months towards the new \$100 deductible; and

"(3) Ensure that seniors are not subject to any further user fees for health services."

I've gladly signed my name to the petition as well.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The petition campaign for TVOntario to save TVO is continuing in a remarkable way, with petitions from all across the province. We have some here from Burlington, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. The petition reads:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality commercial-free television that continues to focus 70% of its programming schedule on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I'm proud to sign my name to this petition.

MANDATORY INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): As the construction industry begins the summer season, this is a very timely

petition. It's to the Honourable Solicitor General and Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry; and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sets workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

1540

TUITION FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent in by Claudio Monteleone of Thunder Bay, who is very concerned about the increase in tuition fees for university students, signed by several hundred people from Thunder Bay in particular:

"Whereas post-secondary educational costs have been increasing due to economic and technological changes;

"Whereas student tuition fees have increased greatly over the past few years;

"Whereas the cost of living for students continues to increase;

"Whereas students are unable to continue their education due to high costs;

"Whereas future economic growth depends on access to post-secondary education;

"Whereas the panel on the Future Directions for Postsecondary Education recognized the inadequacy in financial resources available to post-secondary education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to renew its financial commitment for post-secondary education and to recognize that a multi-year commitment to the restoration of support must be guaranteed."

I am pleased to put my name to that petition.

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it concerns the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax.

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore, we the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to revoke the new tax imposed on the north by Mike Harris and convince the Tory government to recognize that indeed northern Ontario does not need another tax to its residents."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa Est) : «Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province de l'Ontario et la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit à l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance de toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord le l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que L'hôpital Montfort est le seul hôpital enseignant et de formation des professionnels de santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé, offrant une gamme de services complets en français, mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français ;

«Attendu que l'on fait disparaître l'hôpital qui a un des meilleurs rendements de la province et qui, pour fins de comparaison, constitue l'exemple de choix du ministère de la Santé ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de l'Ontario intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé en Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de la communauté.»

Je signe la pétition.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): As I said earlier, the petition campaign to save TVO is just remarkable in terms of participation from all across the province. There have been thousands — here I have petitions from Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, Nipigon, Ontario, just a remarkable number. It reads:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVO continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

Once again, with these thousands of signatures I'm very happy to add my name.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): The honourable member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Congratulations on being in the chair today. You look most appropriate there.

This is to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office and in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement with the contents of this petition.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent in by people concerned about the cutbacks to the educational system in the province and the attack this government is making on education. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Education is presently discussing the education cutbacks in Ontario; and

"Whereas the cuts made so far have already seriously affected our education system and further cuts will endanger essential services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow any more cutbacks in the education system."

I'm wholeheartedly in agreement and I'm happy to sign this.

NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I'm grateful to have another opportunity to have a final petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 104, the Fewer School Boards Act, is a threat to our education system;

"Whereas the Education Improvement Commission has far-reaching and unprecedented powers;

"Whereas outsourcing of non-instructional jobs such as school secretaries, custodians, library technicians and educational assistants will result in chaos and poor service and limited savings, if any;

"We therefore petition the Legislative Assembly to repeal Bill 104, to limit the powers of the Education Improvement Commission and to guarantee successor rights for non-instructional jobs."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that petition.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON ET DE LA FAUNE

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 137, An Act to promote the conservation of fish and wildlife through the revision of the Game and Fish Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi visant à promouvoir la protection du poisson et de la faune en révisant la Loi sur la chasse et la pêche.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill carry? Carried.

Minister, do you have any further remarks to make?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): No, thank you, Mr Speaker. I read a statement earlier today in the House.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS

Mr Runciman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to renew the partnership between the province, municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety / Projet de loi 105, Loi visant à renouveler le partenariat entre la province, les municipalités et la police et visant à accroître la sécurité de la collectivité.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Following my comments, I understand there is unanimous consent with respect to the remaining time to be shared among the opposition parties — I believe that's the case — in agreement at five to 6 for a five-minute bell. That's agreed, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): Is there consensus between the leaders of the two opposition

parties? Agreed. And if necessary, there may be a five-minute bell.

Hon Mr Runciman: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As Solicitor General, I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a few brief remarks at third reading of Bill 105.

Today I want to highlight a number of the provisions of Bill 105, as amended, which I believe will bring fairness, flexibility and accountability to the way policing is organized, paid for and governed in Ontario. Before I address the key points in the bill, I should point out that Bill 105 does not accomplish all of these things by accident. On the contrary, this bill is the result of a comprehensive review of policing which was initiated in December 1995, and extensive consultations with policing stakeholders, including the policing summit, which was held in June 1996. The Who Does What emergency services subpanel also expanded on this work and reported to the government in November 1996.

With respect to the issue of civilian oversight of policing, the Attorney General and I appointed Mr Rod McLeod, the former Deputy Solicitor General, to conduct an independent review of the existing system and recommend a simpler, more efficient and effective system of civilian oversight and police accountability.

Ministry officials, my staff and I also met with representatives of a number of community groups concerned about police oversight. In addition, the members of the standing committee on administration of justice held extensive public hearings on Bill 105, where they heard from witnesses from all across the province about issues of concern.

The government listened to the concerns raised at committee and proposed almost 50 amendments to Bill 105 during clause-by-clause consideration. I am pleased to say that the committee adopted not only the government amendments but also a number of amendments put forward by the parties opposite. Taken together, these amendments strengthen and enhance key areas of the bill, including service delivery, civilian oversight and the police complaints system.

At this time, I would like to thank the members of the justice committee for the long hours they spent carefully considering Bill 105. I also want to express my appreciation to all those who took the time to appear at committee. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the people behind the scenes, in my office and in the policing services division of the Ministry of the Solicitor General, for the outstanding work they did over many months to bring this legislation to fruition. I believe that this legislation will better stand the test of time and more effectively protect the people of Ontario as a result of their collective efforts.

With respect to the contents of Bill 105, first of all I want to indicate that this bill is about fairness. In our view and in the view of the Who Does What panel, and even that of the Provincial Auditor in his reports in 1990 and 1994, it's not fair that some municipalities now receive OPP policing at no direct cost to the municipal taxpayers while their neighbours pay the full amount. I've made this case before, during previous debates concerning this issue, but I believe it's an important point that bears repeating. Some 202 municipalities in Ontario,

representing 85% of the province's population, pay for policing services directly from municipal property taxes. The remaining 576 municipalities do not pay for policing from municipal taxes. In those municipalities policing is provided by the Ontario Provincial Police at no direct charge.

The cost of providing that OPP service is more than \$182 million a year. In general, it is smaller rural municipalities that receive policing at no charge, but that's not always the case. I've mentioned the example of the village of Wheatley in Kent county, which has a population of about 1,500 and pays for policing through municipal taxes. The district of Muskoka has a population of 45,000 and receives policing services without charge. We believe this is an extremely unfair set of circumstances for those municipalities that are paying their fair share of policing costs.

This question of fairness has another aspect which has had an impact on a number of OPP contract locations across the province where for some years now we've had several municipalities refusing to pay their policing bills because their larger neighbours were getting comparable OPP at no direct cost to their taxpayers. That payment default now totals over \$6 million owed to the OPP, and I want to reiterate today that it's money that must be collected. Our government, through Bill 105, is taking action to correct this unfairness. As of January 1, 1998, all municipalities in Ontario will be required to make a contribution towards the cost of policing their communities.

Bill 105 is also about flexibility. This government believes that local needs are best understood by local officials who are accountable for the delivery of services to their ratepayers. Based on the budget process used in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, municipalities will now have control over municipal budgets and will appoint a majority of members to the police services boards.

Bill 105 also gives municipal councils the authority to approve the total police budget envelope. Police services boards will continue to have responsibility for line-by-line budgeting.

This bill empowers municipalities and police services to choose the best possible structure to deliver policing to their own communities. It allows the police to reduce waste and duplication so they can focus on what Ontario residents want, enhanced front-line policing. Whether that means police walking the beat in our cities and towns, a more visible presence in our rural areas or fighting smuggling in our border communities, Bill 105 allows Ontarians, through their local governments, to have their say.

Under Bill 105, as amended, municipalities have a choice of a number of models for service delivery. For instance, municipalities can decide to continue with OPP service and be billed on an actual cost basis; contract with the OPP directly to provide police services; join with a neighbouring municipality or municipalities to establish a joint OPP contract and a joint police services board; enter into a contract with a neighbouring municipal police force to provide police services; or finally, a municipality can join with other municipalities to form a new police service.

Regardless of the option chosen, public safety will not be compromised. In fact, Bill 105 sets out the five core functions that must be provided by any police service in Ontario. These core functions are crime prevention, law enforcement, assistance to victims, maintenance of public safety and emergency response. For the first time, benchmarks will be established by regulation pursuant to the bill to ensure that adequate and effective police protection is provided in every community in Ontario.

1600

The Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services, commonly referred to as OCCPS, will continue to deal with police budget appeal issues in the context of police adequacy. The difference is that now there will be a clear yardstick to measure police adequacy against.

Finally, in many ways Bill 105 is about increased police accountability to the public. Bill 105 transforms the current police complaints and civilian oversight systems from a costly, frustrating and time-consuming model involving four different agencies to a more affordable, more accessible and more accountable system comprised of two agencies. The special investigations unit, or SIU, is not affected by Bill 105. The SIU will continue as an independent agency under the Ministry of the Attorney General with a mandate to investigate cases of serious injury or death involving the police.

Mr McLeod, who conducted the review of police oversight on behalf of the government, recommended that the SIU be placed back under the Ministry of the Solicitor General, but the government opted not to accept that recommendation. Our reasoning, quite simply, is that there has to be a clear understanding and appreciation that the SIU operates very much independently from the ministry responsible for policing in Ontario.

Another critical arm of independent civilian oversight of police, the civilian commission, will deal not only with police budget issues, as I mentioned earlier, but will also have the power to hear appeals, investigate, inquire and report on police conduct or performance of duty for all police officers in Ontario, both municipal and OPP.

The commission has these broad investigative powers either on its own motion or at the request of the Solicitor General, a municipal council or a police services board. Bill 105 simplifies the process of filing a police complaint. It puts the complainant in the driver's seat and allows for a third party to assist in preparing a complaint. Under this new, simplified system, all a person has to do is write a letter detailing the complaint and mail, fax or deliver it to the police station or to the civilian commission on policing. As requested by community groups, Bill 105 was amended to allow complainants the option of filling out a complaint form approved by the commission instead of writing a letter. This form will be available at all police stations in the province.

The bill, as amended, also increases the transparency of the complaint system by enhancing the reporting requirements to both the subject officer and the complainant. For example, the bill provides a 30-day initial response time set for public complaints. Written reports are to be provided to subject police officers and the complainant following completion of the case. Similarly, police chiefs are required to notify subject police officers

within 30 days if the complaint has been continued or withdrawn.

Perhaps the most significant change to the police complaint system under Bill 105 is that it encourages informal resolution by allowing non-serious matters to be resolved any time in the process and by ensuring that statements made during informal resolution are not admissible in any other legal proceedings without consent of the parties.

In any case, under the new complaint system a complainant who is not satisfied with the way a complaint has been handled by the police may request that the commission review the matter. The commission has the power to confirm the decision or assign the investigation of the complaint to another police service. In parallel, a police officer, after a hearing, has the right of appeal to the commission on the outcome and any penalty.

I appreciate that some individuals and organizations have expressed concern about the oversight changes under Bill 105, but I want to clearly indicate my strong belief that what we are doing strengthens police accountability to the public, allows everyone increased access and fosters a clear understanding of what is currently a very difficult system to understand, let alone gain access to.

In conclusion, the changes to the Police Services Act we're debating today are the result of extensive consultation. I would once again like to thank all those who provided their insight into this process, and I look forward to our continuing dialogue during the implementation phase of the bill.

Bill 105, as amended, brings fairness, flexibility and accountability to the way police services in Ontario are organized, delivered, paid for and governed. Many of these changes are long overdue. Bill 105 sets the standard for the protection of our communities for decades to come. I believe these changes will lead to improved policing and a safer Ontario for us, our children and our grandchildren.

Madam Speaker, I have been asked to read this matter into the record:

With respect to an understanding, there is unanimous consent, notwithstanding standing order 42, for the official opposition to give notice for an opposition day to be taken up tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Margaret Marland): Is there agreement? Thank you.

Hon Mr Runciman: I have concluded my remarks.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I request unanimous consent to share the allotted Liberal time this afternoon with the member for Windsor-Sandwich, Mrs Papatello, and the member for Timiskaming, Mr Ramsay.

The Acting Speaker: Is there agreement that they may share their time? It is agreed. So you're going to celebrate your 20th anniversary by taking part in this debate.

Mr Bradley: I am. Thank you very much to the member for Mississauga South. People who are watching today should know, and I reminded them the other day, that Mrs Marland was the Progressive Conservative critic for the field of the environment when I had the privilege of being the environment minister. She'll want to put this

in her campaign literature, of course, but she was an excellent critic in the field of the environment and I appreciated her input very much on those occasions, as I do in this House today.

Applause.

Mr Bradley: The whip of the government leads the applause, appropriately, for Mrs Marland.

I am going to keep my personal contribution to this rather brief this afternoon. This is a bill which has some contentious points in it, but also has some points in it which deserve the support of all members of the House.

Overall, the concern we have is that the police forces in our communities will have the appropriate resources to carry out the responsibilities, because it is one thing to pass legislation and change regulations and announce policy; it's another to be able to carry it out. We will find out, and the minister has on occasion appropriately pointed out, that if people are going to want the services that are provided by police forces, they're going to have to pay for them. That doesn't mean there will be inefficiencies out there that anybody is looking for, that doesn't mean there's going to be some overspending taking place, but it does mean that when you pass new laws and have new regulations and different policies to be implemented, you have to have the resources to implement them.

That's why I know communities across Ontario want to ensure they have adequate funding for their police forces, and we want to know that the Ontario Provincial Police has the necessary personnel and equipment to carry out its responsibility, because it's a different ball game, if you will, today in the field of policing. There are more sophisticated ways of carrying out crime. There are resources available to the criminal elements in our society, such as computers and other high-tech equipment, which make it more difficult for police to deal with certain matters that come to their attention. Therefore, we have to have the necessary resources to carry out the policing if people want that. It is not sufficient to say, "I'm concerned about safety" in a community, but not be prepared to pay the taxes that are going to be necessary to have the appropriate level of policing in that community.

This legislation has some support in that I think you would find many members of the House are in favour of simplifying the procedure for making public complaints about any alleged police misconduct if that would improve the public accessibility and confidence in the system. But in many ways there's a concern that this new process might sweep away any semblance of civilian oversight and public accountability, and those are what people want to see.

1610

The overwhelming majority, virtually everybody involved in policing in this province, is honest, forthright, carries out responsibilities in an appropriate fashion, is cognizant of not breaking the law in order to enforce the law, and is going to treat people in a fair and reasonable fashion.

When it happens that individuals within the policing sector are outside that realm, there has to be a provision for the public to lay legitimate complaints. Of course,

what is frivolous in the mind of one individual may be serious to another. That's a hard balance to strike.

We do not want our police forces to have to carry out the responsibilities with one hand tied behind their back. But equally we do not want a situation where the public may feel they have no access to a method of complaint if indeed there is a need to lodge a complaint. Our system works best when the public has full confidence in our police forces, and that full confidence is there if the public believes it has a fair and legitimate complaints process; in other words, one which is fair to those being complained against and fair to those who may be laying the complaint.

I think we would all agree that allegations of police misconduct should be dealt with in an open, fair and publicly accountable manner that will build public confidence and trust in the police. A closed system will always create mistrust and is not fair to the public or to the vast majority of police officers who conduct themselves responsibly.

I think it's as important that at the end of the process, when there is an exoneration of a member of a police force, that is very public; that when the person has been found not guilty everyone knows it, just as when a person may be found guilty through the process, that is known to the public as well.

We in the opposition are not yet aware of the exact costs that will be faced by municipalities that will now be required to pay the full cost of policing. In the context of the massive downloading of provincial expenses on to the municipal level, we are concerned that many Ontarians will face huge property tax increases as a result. That is a concern.

Police officers, police chiefs and administrators have all expressed the view that they are going to be worried when those tax bills come in. If there's a transferring of responsibility — and that would mean, with it, financial responsibility from the province to local municipalities — members of police forces are worried that their competition for the local tax dollar, so they can carry out their jobs appropriately, will be even greater.

They are justifiably concerned that the resources and personnel that will be required to enforce the laws of this province, to engage in such activities as community policing, may not be there if municipalities touched by a need for greater taxation for other purposes may cut back on the allocation of funds for the police forces. I think this is a legitimate concern.

There are many municipalities — the city of St Catharines is not one of them — small towns and villages, that have had the Ontario Provincial Police provide services to them. I'm sure some of them will be shocked when they see the bill that comes in for policing in their area. Many of these communities do not have the industrial and commercial tax base, or the residential tax base, for that matter, which would allow them to have the necessary amount of money to carry out their police activities.

This government has made many pronouncements in the field of law enforcement, whether it's the Solicitor General or the Attorney General or someone else who might be making those pronouncements, but the way we

will measure the success of the government's initiatives will be on how they are actually carried out. In other words, will the resources be available? It's easy to call a press conference. It's easy to distribute the press release. It's much more difficult to ensure that the people who are carrying out the new responsibility will have the resources and the staff personnel to be able to do so, and that's a worry which I have and I know many others will have.

There has been considerable criticism of the present system's oversight of police forces, particularly as it relates to the way we make complaints. This is always so difficult. Police officers are in a very difficult position because they must be virtually perfect people in the eyes of the public. Nothing would undermine the confidence in police forces more than to find out that there were people breaking the law within those police forces or people engaged in unethical conduct.

That's why police officers are under such great scrutiny. That's why they have to be so cautious all the time. That's why they are worried if they see a system which tilts a balance in favour of those who want to register complaints against police. But equally, in a democratic society where we have an elected assembly as we have today, it is important for the public to be able to lodge those complaints but to have them dealt with, for the sake of both sides, in an expeditious and thorough manner at the same time.

I look out at our police forces and say that they are one way of combating crime. Police officers themselves would tell you, however, that there's another way of dealing with crime as well, and that's engaging in methods which would be defined as crime prevention, and this is a genuine challenge. If we could remove the social problems which contribute to crime in our society, if we could deal with the psychiatric problems which cause some people to commit crimes that if they were healthy mentally they would not do, we would not need the resources for police forces and for jails and for other institutions that appear to be necessary today.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. There are several conversations in the chamber and I don't think it's fair to the member who has the floor. Please continue, member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Speaker. I'm requesting that the government not dwell exclusively on the provision of enforcement activities through police forces but that it also deal with the social problems which contribute to crime which arises in our society.

If we had a society where everyone felt he or she had an equal opportunity to succeed, where injustices were eliminated, where the necessary financial resources and supports were there for the more disadvantaged people in our society, I think we would see less of a need for large police forces and for jails. I remember, when I first entered the Legislature in 1977, visiting some of our institutions with the Honourable Gordon Walker, who was then Minister of Correctional Services. He was succeeded I believe by the Honourable Frank Drea. When you went to these institutions, one of the things you discovered was that many of the people there were ill equipped to survive in our society. Many of them had a

very low level of education and were simply not able to cope, and the only way they could get ahead, I suppose, in society, if you want to put it that way, was to be able to commit a crime. At least in their minds that's what they believed.

When through the education system and the social service system we can deal with those problems early on, we at least reduce the risk of people finding themselves on the wrong side of the law. I'm sure many families are heartbroken by the fact that they've done everything right and still someone in the family has gone on the other side of the law. I read a letter to the editor in one of the Toronto newspapers on the weekend from a parent who said she had four children, and three of them were doing very, very well but a fourth had caused great angst for the family.

The reason I mention that is that even in families where all the resources are there, where they have the money to deal with some of the challenges that face those children, where there is love in the family and so on, there's still a chance that someone will go on the wrong side of the law. Our role is to reduce that chance, and I know we will.

1620

This bill, as I said, has some good provisions in it. It has some provisions we're less happy with. I know my colleague the Liberal critic for the Solicitor General's department and for Correctional Services, David Ramsay, the member for Timiskaming, will be dealing with some of those, so I will conclude my remarks at this time and hope that any necessary regulatory changes can be made to improve the bill.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak in this very brief third reading debate on the issue of the Police Services Act. I think it is extremely important for citizens in Ontario to understand what is being accomplished through this amendment act, what the concerns are that have been expressed to us as legislators during the process of consultation after second reading, and some of the things we will have to be vigilant about in the future around the operation of this act.

I think it is quite right for each government to look at the operation of policing services, to make sure they are keeping up with the times, to make sure they are meeting the needs of the community, to ensure that the basic principles of fairness are applying. The minister said in his remarks and has said on a number of occasions that every government has recognized the need to make some revisions in the way the delivery of police services works to ensure that taxpayers, who are footing the bill for policing services, feel that that burden is distributed in a way that is fair.

The minister must also be aware that simply doing that on a municipal basis, downloading this on to municipalities that have a very low assessment base, is not necessarily going to achieve the kind of fairness the minister talks about in terms of policing. This is a government that has shocked those who are in municipal government quite substantially by downloading a great many of the tasks and the costs of the provincial government on to the

municipal tax base at the same time that it boasts of its ability to reduce taxes.

Madam Speaker, you may be able to hear me speak, but I can barely hear myself speak with the meeting that is going on across the way. I would ask you to call the members to order.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London Centre has asked that I call the chamber to order. I did in fact do that about 10 minutes ago. With respect, I suggest that if you feel compelled to have private conversations, you do it elsewhere than in the chamber. It is disturbing to the member who has the floor.

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I stand admonished.

Mrs Boyd: I wish all the members stood admonished as you do, member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

This is an issue that ought to be of great importance to all of us. The whole issue of safety in our communities is something that we know, in our constituency offices, continues to be of great concern to all our constituents.

It is indeed admirable that the government talks a very fine line about fairness when it talks about making sure that everyone pays for their policing. One of the things I would point out is that everyone has always paid for their policing, but they may pay in different ways and in different proportions. The Ontario Provincial Police operate with government funding that is paid for by all the taxpayers, under the income tax provisions and the sales tax provisions and the gas tax provisions, so it is not entirely correct to say that taxpayers in municipalities which heretofore have not been charged the direct cost of their policing are not paying. They have been paying, and they have been paying in that way because the municipal tax assessment base was so low that adequate policing could not be provided based on the resources that would be available through municipal tax assessment.

That was a decision that wasn't made by our government between 1990 and 1995 or by the Liberal government between 1985 and 1990; this has been the arrangement.

Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I ask the members please, for the third time, if you could constrain your conversations in the chamber. I'm also having difficulty hearing the speaker who has the floor, so if we could extend some courtesy to the member for London Centre, who has the floor, thank you.

Mrs Boyd: I think the issue is the same today as has faced other governments. If you cannot have the appropriate assessment base to provide the level of policing that is adequate for your community to ensure community safety, to ensure emergency response that is appropriate, then we all suffer as a result. That was why the decision was made to share costs in a different way for small municipalities that didn't have a large assessment base.

The minister is very fond of saying, "Ah, but this does not disadvantage small municipalities, because we have given them the permission in this act to join with other municipalities so that they can pool their money and their resources to offer policing." The only problem is that the ministry, through its guidelines that it has sent to municipalities, is severely limiting the ability of municipalities

to make that decision on a local level. We heard last week of the issue of a small community near Sault Ste Marie that was not given permission to amalgamate its policing with Sault Ste Marie; it was being forced to pay the per citizen cost of OPP policing because of the guidelines of the ministry.

So although we are in the process today of passing a bill which gives permission to municipalities to make local decisions about how they will achieve adequate policing, we at the same time have a ministry that is putting restrictions on those municipalities, that is denying them the right to make the choices they believe are best for their communities. All the fine talk about equity, all the fine talk about local decision-making pales when you look at the reality that is there.

The minister boasts that the changes to the bill will ensure there is adequate policing, there will be standards for adequate policing. But they are not in the bill; they are going to be introduced by regulation later. It is quite clear to anyone who knows how regulations are formed that those regulations will burst upon us in the Gazette with no necessary consultation with either the policing community or the citizens they serve, and that is a serious problem.

I say to the minister that it is going to be extraordinarily important that he take measures to ensure that the people of Ontario believe that it is more than rhetoric when this government talks about community service, that the actual base of policing in this province, the regulations that guarantee adequacy, are enforceable, that municipalities that now have the whip hand — because they appoint the members of the police services board, they now have the whip hand over police budgets — that do not meet those standards can be forced by the government to meet those standards, and it is not clear that this is the case at all under this particular regime.

1630

We will have to be very vigilant because it is very clear that the move to have matters dealt with locally without having any kind of general oversight to track what happens to complaints that are dealt with at the local level makes it difficult to know whether or not this is going to be effective. I would say that the principle of civilian oversight is severely compromised by this bill and by the way this bill was brought into being.

In the notes that were released publicly at the time of the release of this bill, the minister boasted of wide consultation. But even in his own notes it was very clear whom he had consulted with. It is very important, as we look at this consultation process, to be very clear that this comprehensive review of police services, this so-called comprehensive consultation, involved policing associations, chiefs of police and front-line police officer associations; it involved the oversight body, the police services boards organization; and it involved the municipalities and, quite frankly, the business folks at the various municipalities; but it had absolutely no input from the broad range of citizens who are the ones who expressed concern about confidence in their police.

Not only was this summit limited in its consultation, in terms of the people who came to speak to it, but following the summit this minister set up a working group

which again excluded civilian members of the public, who have a right to be included in discussions about changes to this bill.

I don't think the minister would say the general public is wrong to have some qualms about the way policing services are delivered. We have heard story after story, we have read court minutes after court minutes that lead us to have concerns about the way in which the justice system treats its own in terms of how complaints and charges come forward. We have unfortunately far too many inquest reports that suggest very clearly that we are not training our police officers properly, equipping them properly, giving them the proper guidance and then, if they fail to do their duty in an appropriate way, disciplining them properly. As a result, people have been injured and killed when that was not necessary.

There are large groups within the community who want to be reassured that they can have confidence in the police but have a hard time doing that when they are not consulted when such major changes are being planned.

The minister says that the whole disciplinary process was open to consultation, but the minister knows very well that he appointed a particular person to do a very short study and that this particular person conducted that study in such a way that many of the interested groups felt unable to participate. Because of the way the whole procedure was structured, they felt it was not a fair study in the first place.

The only comfort those citizens' groups get at the end of the process is that some of the recommendations, ones I would say were the most bizarre recommendations brought forward in the McLeod report, the government did decide, quite fortunately, not to implement.

The government did decide to keep an independent SIU unit, and I think that is an important plus in this bill. But the government did collapse all the other bodies into one body and then hand back to the chiefs of police a huge, major piece of the decision-making around whether or not complaints will be considered at all and then how they will deal with those complaints, all in the name of local autonomy, so called.

When we are talking about policing, particularly policing that is now going to be directed from the municipal level of government, with very little oversight in terms of the rest of the province, we are looking at a possibility of activities both on the disciplinary front and on the police complaints front which should give us cause for concern.

Fairness not only must be done but must be seen to be done. Because of the way in which this whole bill has been brought forward, many people are already saying they cannot expect fairness from this process, and that taints the process from the beginning.

It is a very difficult matter to set up a civilian oversight process that is going to meet the needs of all those groups, but many of the criticisms that were brought forward of the Police Services Act as it existed before amendment are similar to the criticisms that are being brought forward now. If the previous government did not listen to some of those concerns when they put their bill through in 1990, surely this government could have learned from that experience and looked at how it could have been made stronger and better.

When you find that none of the concerns basically have been satisfied by any of the groups by this process, with I suspect the exception of the — no, even the chiefs of police. I was going to say the chiefs of police were happy, but of course the chiefs of police are quite opposed to municipal governments having decision-making power over who's going to sit on police services boards. They see that as a situation where those who have the whip hand in terms of the budget now will determine what is necessary in terms of policing, and they do not believe that is the appropriate way to do that.

We have all the groups still concerned. I've talked a bit about why the citizens' groups are concerned: first of all, no consultation; second, no assurance that some of the concerns around inappropriate policing that have come forward have been addressed at all; third, this whole issue of the chief of police: You have to complain to the chief of police, and if the chief of police decides that your complaint is not meritorious, is frivolous, has no bearing on anything and is not to be looked at, then where do you go?

The minister says you can still appeal to this other group, and this other group will then decide whether or not it's frivolous, and if it's not frivolous, they'll send it back to the chief of police for investigation. If someone who has already decided your complaint is frivolous and gets it sent back to do the investigation, how serious is the investigation going to be? There we have a crisis of confidence immediately. We have a whole lot of people who are going to say: "This is ridiculous. The chief of police doesn't want to hear this. The oversight board says he must at least look into it, but he has already decided it isn't serious, so how serious is the investigation going to be?" That's from the citizen point of view.

This is equally inappropriate from the police officers' point of view, because their view is that when all these things are determined by the chief, and furthermore the chief, on non-serious matters, doesn't even have to have a hearing into complaints, the police officers are at real double jeopardy from their higher ranks.

I think we should take that fairly seriously. I think we should hear citizens being unhappy about this process and those who are subject to the process being unhappy, and their unhappiness resulting from what both sides see as an inappropriate ability of a police chief to make decisions around these issues, which should give us pause. That should make us wonder why two groups that generally do not, on the issue of police oversight, necessarily see things from the same direction see exactly the same problem.

Police personnel are quite concerned about this whole issue of the efforts within this act to slough off some complaints as not serious and therefore to be dealt with through an internal process, and if the police officer doesn't like the result, the police officer has to go through a grievance process under the union contract. They see that as serious because they see their role as police officers, their function as police officers, the discharge of their duties as police officers as inseparable from the so-called, in this government's words, "employee-employer relations" aspect. I think the general public sees the same impossibility.

1640

For police officers this becomes more serious when it is coupled with some of the other actions this government is taking, and in particular the actions with the Provincial Offences Act. One of the areas of increased police chief power in this version of the Police Services Act enables a police officer to be subject to discipline processes because of inadequate performance, and to be subject to that without the opportunity of a hearing. Why does that become an issue? If at the same time you have a Provincial Offences Act which allows the municipalities to take over control of provincial offences and to get the revenue from that, essentially every single front-line police officer we spoke to during the consultation period, and certainly whom I have spoken to outside of that, said, "What is to prevent, first of all, the municipality that sets the budget from appointing police services board members, of whom they have the majority, who set, with the police chief, unrealistic targets for the kind of income that's going to come out of the Provincial Offences Act income?" Then the police chief will look at people's "results" — this is governing by results — and say: "Police officer X hasn't issued enough tickets. That's an inadequate performance," and subjecting that officer to disciplinary processes. I think we should all be concerned about that.

One of the things that has distinguished us as a country has been the division of powers to prevent that kind of thing from happening. We as Canadians have often laughed at our American cousins about the whole business of: "Things are much more serious when you get towards the end of the month, because if the quota hasn't been met, then you've got a real difficulty. You can expect to see a police officer lurking under a bush, around every corner." There's some reality to that, however exaggerated that concept, that fear may be.

What we have here is a cascade of events that create potential difficulties for us and certainly for the whole public perception of policing and for the whole way in which we are able to ensure that police officers are able to deal with their jobs in appropriate ways without feeling that they're going to get political pressure up the line from those budget-makers to require them to apply the law in a way that does not allow them to exercise their discretion. The exercise of their discretion, they believe, is a very important tool for them to be sure they are seen as applying the law in a fair way, in a way that is directed at the safety and security of the community, in a way that takes account of the circumstances that only the officer at the scene can see and that takes account of both the general deterrent measures and the particular deterrent measures that are expected to be achieved by any kind of police action in the first place.

The other part of this disciplinary issue that exercises police officers and police unions, of course, is the whole issue of when you shift a whole series of things into the employer-employee relationship, you get into a situation where escalating costs for the union and for the employer often preclude a just settlement to issues. If everything needs to go to a grievance and both parties pay for the grievance in that way, you may not get to the bottom of many issues, because there may be an effort to try to group and lump things together, there may indeed be a

real issue around whether or not there is any action taken at all. That of course should concern all of us as citizens.

The reality we heard from many police associations is that what is called in this bill "serious misconduct" is a very small percentage of the kind of complaints that come forward. It's really important for us to understand that for us as regular citizens our contact with the police disciplinary process is likely to be in what is determined by this bill to be the non-serious area. So we have a community of interest with police officers in this province when we say that this process as set down is unfair to the complainant and is unfair to the person being complained about. It can lead, in terms of the police officer, to a situation of real double jeopardy; and for the citizen, we will just simply hear again and again, when they have complaints about the behaviour or the conduct of a police officer, of an eroding confidence that they can get any kind of satisfaction.

It is a really serious issue that was not addressed in the hearings, and it ought to be addressed. This whole unsatisfactory work performance issue in this police act is going to give rise to huge unrest and fear among those who are applying the law in this province. We should be concerned about that. When police officers are concerned about the kind of scrutiny that is being given their work, when they are fearful that that scrutiny has something to do with issues other than the appropriate application of the laws they are there to apply, we should all be concerned.

When we look at the proposal in that whole area of the way in which penalties are going to come forward, it adds more to that concern, because there's a very substantial penalty that can be put in place in this informal discipline process: 40 hours' pay can be assessed. That's very substantial. No hearing is guaranteed before the application of that penalty. It's a real problem. Not one of the police employment agreements that we could find had any informal penalty that came anywhere near 40 hours of pay.

Apparently, at least as we understand, the highest level of penalty on informal situations would be a penalty of two days' leave or forfeiture of 16 hours' pay. That's a huge difference from 40 hours.

In these informal processes, there's the removal of an ability for just an admonishment or a reprimand to be administered. Unfortunately what we have is a requirement that a penalty be levied. There's no apparent ability to have the kind of admonishment or reprimand that was allowed under the previous act.

The other issue we see is that there is no longer under the act, in subsection 68(8), any protection for without-prejudice statements that might be made by either the officer or the complainant when there's an effort to resolve a matter informally. So what we will see is everything driven to the nth degree because you cannot informally sit down and without prejudice discuss the issues in a case.

1650

There are many other matters in this act that concern us. I think it is essential for you to know that throughout the hearings we heard from a wide range of people who were expressing very serious concerns about this act. We

have not seen the kind of change that we would have expected from a government that truly was interested in making this act work better for all the players. What we saw was a determination to push this act forward at all costs and in fact to time-allocate it, to force it through this Legislature, with the result that we have very few minutes left to even discuss this act.

So I am going to cede my place. I know at least one and possibly two of my colleagues want also to speak. I will end my comments by urging the Solicitor General to be very vigilant about the things that don't work when this gets into place, to stop saying one thing, like the creation of joint police boards publicly, and then send guidelines to them saying they can't join with whichever police board they want.

There is a real necessity for there to be much more transparency around what is being accomplished here and there is a great necessity for this government to understand the issues that are being brought forward by the George family, for example, and by the many other families who have seen a loved one subjected to a level of force by our police departments that has resulted in grave injury or death, in some cases, and the concerns of the public that civilian oversight under this model is going to erode the public confidence in our police forces.

All of that, which I am sure this minister did not want to have the result of his bill, may occur, and it is his job to continue to be vigilant and to see whether the dire predictions about how this is going to create even more difficulty, more real anxiety among police officers and among the general public about the general operation of policing — those things are very serious; and that the minister will undertake to monitor the kinds of matters that come forward in a much more open and a much more serious manner than he has since this government was elected.

There have been many serious issues of policing that have come forward and we have not seen this government taking action in a way that gives us confidence that they understand the issues of civilian oversight or that they agree it is an essential element of ensuring that policing is done appropriately in a democratic society.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I am pleased to rise in my place today to speak to third and final reading of Bill 105. The government has entitled this act *An Act to renew the partnership between the province, the municipalities and the police and to enhance community safety*. When you go through this bill — and we've done that on quite a few occasions, having gone through it clause-by-clause in the justice committee of this Legislature — I think you would find that a lot of the changes, especially to the civilian oversight parts of this bill, have really been caused by the government's need to save money. The government has said that the new civilian oversight mechanism will cost about \$3 million less.

I've said on many occasions that while it is very important that we all save money and use the taxpayers' very precious and hard-earned dollars in the most cost-effective manner that we can, there are some things that we do in government that are very, very important. Having civilian supervision or oversight, as we say, of police activities is really a fundamental principle of a

democracy that is run by civilians that employs paramilitary force to administer the criminal justice system. It's a very important tenet of our democracy.

It hasn't always been that way. In fact, it's fairly ironic, I find, that it was 25 years ago that a Conservative government felt it necessary to bring really the first substantive civilian oversight mechanism that Ontario had ever seen into this province. It was Arthur Maloney QC who, after a number of highly publicized complaints about police conduct in Toronto, made the initial recommendation that there should be a civilian review of improper police conduct in Ontario.

That was 25 years ago, and since that time there have been three other commissions that have made very similar recommendations: Justice Morand's royal commission inquiry into the Metropolitan Toronto Police practices of 1976; then Cardinal Carter's report in 1979, a report to civic authorities of Metro Toronto and its citizens; and the Pitman task force report, commissioned by Metropolitan Toronto in 1977. That was entitled the Metropolitan Toronto Task Force on Human Relations: Now is Not Too Late. All of these reports recommended introduction of civilian review.

Civilian review is very important and it's a basis of democracy. It's important from the citizen's perspective when he or she has been wrongly treated by a police officer. There has been widespread dissatisfaction with police investigating allegations of police wrongdoing, and rightfully so. There should be a separation of police investigation of their own activities. That's why we have civilian oversight in a democracy.

This led to the Conservative government of 1981 introducing a three-year pilot project and establishing the office of the public complaints commissioner in the city of Toronto. In December 1989, the Police Services Act was amended, again by a Conservative government, which developed a civilian review right across this province for all provincial police forces.

I said in the beginning of my remarks we have come full circle because Bill 105, I believe, substantially waters down the ability of proper civilian oversight. Really what's ironic about this too is that there are many aspects of Bill 105 that the police officers across this province are very concerned about also and they've expressed that concern to us in committee through the public hearings we held. I think police officers certainly have a right to be concerned about their fate being thrown back to more internal police procedures. They have to be concerned about the independence and the fairness when it is their superiors who judge the validity of a complaint.

Many police officers and police associations came before the committee as we travelled to cities across the province, stating that the ability that Bill 105 gives a police chief to initiate, himself or herself, a complaint against a police officer could very well be abused and it could be very well abused because there is another aspect to this bill, a new code of behaviour, if you will, that is introduced, and that is unsatisfactory work. What's different about this new concept of unsatisfactory work that's introduced in the bill is that unlike misconduct, which is stated in the bill in detail about what constitutes police misconduct — there's a full list on a page of all

the various actions that we construe as being misconduct by police officers — unsatisfactory work is not defined.

So what police officers are really very much concerned about, especially in today's economic climate, is that a police chief could initiate a complaint against an officer for unsatisfactory work based on maybe such things as not levying a sufficient number of speeding tickets or parking tickets in a municipality.

1700

Why is this a concern right now? With this new downloading regime of the Harris government, where municipalities are being forced to come up with more and more of their own revenues to pay for local services, obviously the levying of fines through ticketing by municipal police forces would be an ample opportunity for municipalities to raise money. Now Bill 105 gives an ample tool to the police department, to the police services board, which I'm sure could, through the municipal council, put pressure on the police chief to make sure that the men and women in those police forces are not only upholding the law and protecting the public but know it's necessary to make sure that sufficient tickets are written month after month to generate the revenues that are required now because we can only tax so much through local property taxation. Of course, this is caused by so much of the downloading that's going to the municipalities.

Another major downloading that is brought to you courtesy of Bill 105 — and one could say it may be an act of fairness — is that the Ontario government is now making sure that all municipalities will levy a per household charge on the local taxation through the municipalities for all policing in Ontario. Those sparsely populated, less wealthy rural municipalities that up until now have been receiving police services through their payment of Ontario income tax are now going to have a per household levy that we hear could be in the neighbourhood of about \$250 a year additional to all the other local tax increases that are going to occur next year.

This is a big concern for these municipalities and another reason why I think we're going to see increased pressure on the men and women who should be out there making sure our communities are safe and being a little more proactive in working with the community, which is the trend today in community policing, rather than having a watchful eye over their shoulder each and every month to make sure they're writing a sufficient number of tickets to generate revenue for the local police department and the municipality.

We moved many amendments that unfortunately did not get accepted by this government because the government seemed bent upon drastically cutting down citizens' ability to make a complaint and to have independent adjudication of those complaints. That was a big concern for both community groups and police officers themselves. They came before us and made those complaints, but the passage of Bill 105, which I believe is going to happen later on today, is just another example where this government is not listening to the people of Ontario and is proceeding on its own track.

It's interesting to note that the vast majority of police officers, I think most people in Ontario would agree, are dedicated and hardworking, but as in any group of people

in a profession, things do go wrong and people do make mistakes. So we constantly have to have some sort of supervisory mechanism to make sure that when things do go wrong the public has the confidence that the mechanism is in place to make sure that justice is done. It's like politics when it comes to these circumstances.

It's very important that justice is even perceived to have been done so that people have full confidence in the system, to make sure that if something does go wrong there's a civilian mechanism there to ensure that we will get to the bottom of it and, if something has gone wrong, the people will be punished. Through a system that's consistent and fair and judicious, we can assure the people of Ontario and the police officers that we have a system that works and is fair and democratic. That's important for the people of Ontario and it's important for a democratic society.

What's interesting about this and came up in our committee is that this sort of problem is not unique. All professions have problems within their membership, and in most professions they have been given the authority to be self-regulating. One of the government members in committee said, "If self-regulation is good enough for doctors and dentists and lawyers" — and went on to a few more — "then why wouldn't it be good enough for police officers?" I was quite concerned about that remark and that lack of sense of civic responsibility that we must maintain with our police forces and came back to that member to say, "We don't authorize dentists or doctors to use guns." That's the difference.

We confer some extraordinary powers on the men and women we entrust to be police officers, to uphold the peace in society, and with those extraordinary powers must come extraordinary responsibilities. That's why we must always maintain very strong civilian oversight of police. With those powers must come those responsibilities, and part of those responsibilities has to be accountability.

A system, to work well and to be perceived to work well, to function well in a democracy, has to be accountable to the people who pay for it and support it through their democratic institutions such as the Legislature. Anybody who feels, "We'll let the police self-regulate just like any other profession, because it certainly is a profession," is dead wrong when it comes to that. There must always be strong civilian oversight of our police forces.

I must tell you that when I talk to police officers across the province, that's the system they want too. They know they have to be accountable to the government of the day — actually beyond the government of the day. They swear a loyalty to the country and they swear a personal loyalty to uphold the law. That is their responsibility, and for that we give them the tools and the powers to carry out their work.

I rose in my place in this House last week to speak to a situation where an officer was killed last week in Ontario, and I think it's important that police officers understand the respect that we as politicians have for the danger of the job they pursue out there as police officers in Ontario. It is a very dangerous job, and unfortunately it's a more dangerous job today than it ever has been before. We have to do everything in our power as

politicians to ensure that they are protected, that they have the tools to do the job, that they have the training to do the job properly and that they are well equipped to do that job. Part of that — they know it also — is that to protect them there has got to be good civilian oversight of the whole system so they feel they're working in a system that is fair and unbiased.

Their big concern is when a police chief in a local police department can start to either initiate a complaint or deal with a complaint — this starts behind doors without the Ontario police services commission knowing about it — and can, on an arbitrary basis, be prosecutor, judge and jury, and mete out a punishment. As previous speakers have said, punishments can be as great as a week's pay. That's an incredible price to pay for maybe unsatisfactory work performance, however that's defined, especially when it's undefined, for a police officer and his or her family to pay because the police chief might feel that a quota of parking tickets has not been fulfilled in a certain month in town X in Ontario.

That's the type of thing that still needs to be changed in this bill. It's not a perfect piece of legislation; it's a piece of legislation that still needs many amendments. It needs to have much tighter and stricter independence of civilian oversight of police so that many of these complaints cannot be handled on an internal basis.

One of the areas that has been taken out of this bill that had been there previously is the ability of a third party to make a complaint on behalf of a victim. Many times in society an independent party walking down the street might see some behaviour from a police officer or a number of police officers that they as citizens feel is improper.

1710

Under the current act, before we pass this one, that person has the ability to make a complaint as a citizen of Ontario because of that particular incident that happened to somebody else. This privilege, I think this right, is now being taken away through Bill 105. I think that's wrong, because there are also other reasons why a third party might have to make a complaint on behalf of a victim.

Not everyone in society is fully literate. Not everyone in society has the ability or the confidence to make a complaint to a police department. Most people in society feel intimidated when they have to have an encounter with police officers, most people would rather not have any sort of encounter with a police officer, but citizens know it has been their right up till now to make a complaint when they see what they believe is a wrongdoing.

This right is going to be taken away through Bill 105, and an independent third party would not be able to make a complaint about an action they thought was ill advised, which either they witnessed or perhaps a victim came to them and asked them to do that on their behalf. This will be taken away. I believe this is a big mistake, because there are many in society who just don't have the confidence or the ability to make this complaint process effective. They're not going to be able to access this process. They're not going to be able to understand where they can go beyond to the next step if the police chief turns them down or if at the front desk the desk

sergeant says, "This is not the appropriate time to do it," or maybe they got sloughed off. That complaint could stop there.

It's very important that our police departments and police officers know there is an effective means of hearing complaints so that they know the system works and they know that the people they serve out there have confidence that the system works. That's how this whole system works. It's basically almost an article of faith that we in the public have to have faith in our police system, that it is going to work on our behalf, that it is going to be fair and just. If that faith ever breaks down, the tenets of our whole democratic society break down.

It is of the utmost importance that the perception and the reality are there that police services in Ontario are fair and just, that when those services break down from time to time, when a mistake happens, there's a system in place that will get to the bottom of that and correct that situation so that all of us continue to have confidence in the police system. That's very important.

Today we've moved backwards 25 years, as I started my comments by saying. We've lost a bit of ground in our pursuit of democracy today, and I think it's a sad day for the Harris government.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate. I want to thank Jim Bradley from St Catharines, Dave Ramsay, and especially Marion Boyd, who led off on behalf of our caucus in this debate. I'll indicate to you that Sandra Pupatello from Windsor is going to be speaking after me, and I would urge people not to get the clicker going yet.

What that indicates is something most remarkable, you see, because other than the minister, not one Tory backbencher has wanted to participate in this third reading, this final debate on what is a major revision to the Police Services Act, an attack on civilian oversight, an attack on police officers, something that will serve neither our communities nor our public nor, I believe, our police officers well.

I make mention of that because just last week some proposed rule changes — and I have no doubt they're going to be rammed through with the strength and the abuse of the majority this government has. But one of the rationales for reducing the time frames in which participants in debate can speak, it was argued by the member for — where is that guy from? — Nepean. It was argued by him that it's to permit more members to participate in the debate. What gives?

There's some roorbacking going on here, methinks, some classic, old-fashioned, Tory roorbacking. And roorbackers like this you don't find very often, because the fact remains that here we have an important bit of legislation, with not one Tory backbencher prepared to express their views, prepared to expose how much disdain they really have for police by virtue of what will inevitably be their support, like the little trained seals that they are. One of these Tory backbenchers, these trained seals, has accomplished the skill of balancing balloons on their nose but, by God, they can vote when ordered to.

They're not the most competent trained seals. Let's make that quite clear. They're far from being competent trained seals, because their repertoire of tricks, of per-

formances, is rather limited. But by God, at the end of the day, they'll vote as told, regardless of their conscience, regardless of what their constituents say, regardless of the welfare of their community.

I want to mention, and I don't know whether the member for Wentworth North is going to be here to vote on this, but I recall what he had to say about this government. He said: "There's something wrong when the Premier and a couple of unelected staff people can run the entire province. It's a dictatorship." That's what Tony Skarica, the member for Wentworth North, had to say.

I don't know whether Gary Carr, the former parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, is going to be here today. He may well have other things — and I understand; not every member can be here on every occasion for a vote. Some people have responsibilities in their riding. Gary Carr, the former parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, had this to say — Gary Carr, the parliamentary assistant. I have no quarrel with the Solicitor General. The Solicitor General is here. I just quarrel with his legislation and the manner in which he's ignored police officers during the course of deliberations on Bill 105. But let me tell you what Gary Carr had to say: "Mike Harris has got to realize this is still a democracy, not a dictatorship." That's what Gary Carr, the former parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, had to say.

Now Bill Murdoch, I'm not sure if I can tell you what he had to say. May I merely show it to you? No, I think it warrants telling, because Bill Murdoch said with respect to this government, "You have to be nicey-nicey" — it's right here — "and kiss ass if you want to get ahead."

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): This is not the issue.

Mr Kormos: Well, don't shoot the messenger. I'm only telling you what one of the former parliamentary assistants in the Tory benches had to say about his government: You have to be nicey-nicey and pucker up if you want to get ahead. That's what Bill Murdoch, the member for Grey-Owen Sound had to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): The member for Welland-Thorold knows — if you read from the letter, fine.

Mr Kormos: The problem is, Speaker, I've got it written on both sides. I'm reading it from this side, but I'll move on from there.

I'm disturbed and distressed that Tory backbenchers aren't participating in this debate. I don't know whether their lack of familiarity with the bill is what dissuades them from joining in the debate, whether their embarrassment about the bill is what dissuades them from participating in the debate, whether their disinterest in debate and in the process is what dissuades them, but I do know that New Democrats will not be supporting Bill 105.

I tell you that to find anything attractive about 105 that would bring us to a position where we could support it is drawn from approximately four major areas of the bill. The bill is beyond erosion. It's an outright attack on civilian oversight, which has been developed over the course — quite frankly, I'll give credit where credit is due. It's origins are from within the Bill Davis govern-

ment of the early 1980s, and I recall some of the major inquiries and hearings that were held that gave rise to civilian oversight of police misconduct.

As a young law student I attended some of them here in Toronto. Those were hearings that gave rise to the establishment of rules and the ultimate establishment of civilian oversight, civilian oversight that had been built on over the course of the years of coalition, the years 1985 and 1986 under the leadership of Ian Scott, and subsequently reinforced by Howard Hampton and Attorney General Marion Boyd.

1720

Civilian oversight is something that's imperative if there's going to be independence of a body which reviews conduct or alleged misconduct and which, at arm's length, responds to that. Civilian oversight is crucial if the public is going to have confidence, if the system is going to have any integrity.

This bill turns the clock back over a decade in terms of abandoning the concept of civilian oversight and returns more and more power to individual chiefs of police in a way that neither the public can endorse the proposal nor can many of the police officers who spoke to the committee. Police officers clearly wanted an adjudication performed by somebody independent of their immediate supervisor, to wit, their chief of police. It seems to me, in a peculiar sort of way, because I acknowledge that police associations and the people they represent were often at odds with the civilian and community groups that were advocates of civilian oversight, many of them met, notwithstanding the divergent interest.

They're very concerned about the transformation of police services boards from provincially dominated, and that is to say dominated by provincial appointees, to dominated by municipal appointees. I've got to tell you there is something inherently attractive about the proposition of municipal appointments being the dominant number of appointments on a police services board when it's municipal taxpayers who are footing the bill.

There was a time — quite frankly, before this government, the Tory government — when I would have been more inclined to support the proposition of a majority of municipal appointees, because that was a time before the massive downloading by Harris and the Tories on to municipalities. It was a time, before Harris and the Tories here at Queen's Park, when Queen's Park was prepared to support policing in the province, and support it with the resources it needed if it was going to adequately, properly and effectively do its job.

We've got the Niagara Regional Police — and I don't quarrel with the chief of police — having to ponder advertising on police cruisers to help finance policing. Mind you, the Niagara Region Police Association, through its spokesperson, Mike Pratt, says that's nuts; says it, among other things, starts to trivialize policing. It creates the perception of policing being less than independent, having less than the independence it should have.

In this context and in view of the fact that municipalities are being told, by virtue of, among other things, Bill 108, to use their police officers as revenue collectors, we're concerned, especially when we regard that in conjunction with yet another part of Bill 105 that makes

it totally unacceptable to us. We're concerned that police officers are increasingly going to be used as revenue collectors, are going to forfeit their independence to respond to crime and be the ticket deliverers for high-ticket items, if you will, particularly those items that, as a result of this government's recent legislation, will result in fine revenues going directly to the municipality. The police have that concern too.

From a police perspective, one of the repugnant elements of this bill was the inclusion of a new disciplinary standard, and that was the concept of unsatisfactory work performance as being something that can draw discipline.

Speaker, you weren't there, but this was a particularly painful stage in the committee, when we were trying, we were doing our best, and in fact spent some time trying to get Mr Wood, the parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General, to talk about unsatisfactory work performance. What does it mean, Mr Wood? It warrants some explanation, something on the record to give people down the road some feel, some sense of, what's the problem that's being addressed by the inclusion of "unsatisfactory work performance"?

We know, because we heard, what police officers believe it's there for. Police officers and their associations very candidly told us that they feared that unsatisfactory work performance — because, you see, prior to the inclusion of that there was section 73 of the act, and there will continue to be 73, which provides for basically the code of misconduct, those things which, if contravened, resulted in consequences for police officers.

We weren't told of a single scenario where in that code of misconduct section 73 was inadequate for the purpose of responding to a police officer's misconduct. We couldn't get a single illustration of why it was necessary to import this vague, amorphous, ill-defined or almost undefinable concept of unsatisfactory work performance, neither from the parliamentary assistant nor from any of the brain trust that were there with the parliamentary assistant — you know, the high-priced civil service help, intimate with the development of the bill and the policy developments. Quite frankly, I think they were gagged a little bit in that they weren't allowed to explain why "unsatisfactory work performance" has been imported into the legislation.

That lead us to what I suppose was the almost irresistible conclusion that the cops on this one are right, that there's inevitably something insidious about the inclusion of unsatisfactory work performance. This government has given tools to communities to raise new revenues by virtue of transferring the ability to prosecute and collect the revenues from certain levels of provincial offences, including speeding tickets, to turn them into municipal revenues. That means that police officers — good cops, hardworking, committed, professional women and men who work in dangerous and unpleasant circumstances — I tell you that; you know that as well as I do. I suppose my greatest familiarity is with the Niagara Regional Police Force. I have acquired, over the past, familiarity with other police forces from geographic area to geographic area, in a variety of capacities. So be it.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Is it lifestyle or —

Mr Kormos: Yes. Policing is as professional and skilled in this province as it could be anywhere. What I found ironic was that this government, which promised to do things differently, this porcine government that said, "No more troughing," have had an unparalleled presence at the trough, all the snouts in there ear deep, including a recent junket to New York City where three government backbenchers — why you needed three, I don't know; I guess one to hold on to the watch, the other to hold on to the wallet while the third one is doing whatever it is one does. Three government backbenchers on a junket to New York City to examine New York City policing, as if it's going to constitute some sort of model for Ontario. Unbelievable.

Here are the photos in the Sun, right out of NYPD Blue, I suppose. You've got these three backbenchers down there travelling Times Square — regarding New York City cops as a model? I'm sorry, Solicitor General, there's nothing that Ontario's cops have to learn from New York City police officers. I can't think of a single thing that they have to learn. Indeed, I am told that one of the largest single divisions within the New York City Police Department is their internal affairs division that investigates other police officers. That's what happens when cops are increasingly underpaid, when they are increasingly under-resourced, and when they're increasingly put into the role of mere revenue collectors rather than being allowed to police.

1730

We reject the inclusion of unsatisfactory work performance as a disciplinary threshold or standard for police officers. The code of misconduct, section 73, has worked well. This will give increased and arbitrary powers to chiefs of police and police services boards to engage in witchhunts of good cops who may not manage to play the politics well enough.

In that regard there were many community groups, civilian groups and police associations that were particularly valuable to the committee, and I only regret that the government didn't respond to them. I found particularly interesting the contributions to the committee made by Roy Rawluk, who is a police constable but acting, as he described it, in his own right, not representing a police force or a police association, but who provided some extremely valuable material and insights around the issue of unsatisfactory work performance. I am, as I'm sure other committee members are, grateful to Roy Rawluk. His material was extremely valuable.

Our final major hesitation was the bill's failure to deal with the lack of interpretation of subsection 113(9) of the act. We moved an amendment to the bill which would amend subsection 113(9) to clarify and reinforce the duty of a police officer to cooperate in the event of the SIU investigation of a police shooting.

There were a number of models provided to the committee to facilitate that end. The use immunity model: that is to say that a police officer's statement, compellable by 113(9), would not be capable of being introduced as evidence against that police officer, indeed because it was compellable. The Solicitor General knows what I'm talking about. I'm not sure the Attorney General does, but then again, so be it.

We heard about use immunity as a proposition. We heard about proposals for there being workplace-style disciplines, that is to say, interpreting subsection 113(9) as a condition of work. We heard about the difference between subject officers and witness officers and a proposal, that not everybody agreed with, that there be some distinction in the treatment of subject officers as compared to witness officers in terms of compelling a statement under subsection 113(9). Unfortunately, because 113 wasn't addressed in Bill 105, our amendment trying to introduce debate around the issue was not in order and rejected by the Tory Chair of the committee. I think it's imperative, though, because there remain too much uncertainty and too much concern among the public.

The Cherry Beach incident of a couple of months ago is the most blatant example of the failure to apply even the most modest intent of 113(9) to police officers being investigated. When there was no question about some very serious misconduct — a fellow took a beating; there was no question about that — people clammed up, dummied up. It was a flagrant contravention of 113(9). The community has been increasingly concerned about the inability of the SIU to gather evidence in a timely and accurate way promptly after a police shooting.

I appreciated the Solicitor General's comments earlier today in the House, where he indicated that duty to cooperate remains very much on the government's plate. We look forward to participating in that debate and encourage those community civilian groups with a strong interest to demand an opportunity for input.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I am pleased to speak to Bill 105 today. I think it's in the best interests of the people from Windsor-Sandwich so they too know what we're debating today and what Bill 105 is about. I'd like to mention a couple of things today.

First, I'd begin with what the public in Ontario expected from a Mike Harris government and compare that to what we are getting. When we are finally dealing with legislation that affects police services, many people, police included, and certainly members of the public who are active with the police services, never expected Bill 105 nor its contents. I'd like to talk about that initially and speak specifically to some of those amendments we would have liked to have seen in the legislation that are not there. I certainly wish I had more time to get into more detail.

Specifically, the Mike Harris government campaigned and said they would be tough on crime. I think we all remember that. We were talking about the justice system as well. If there was anything the Conservatives were known for, it was, "We're tough on crime." They made a big kerfuffle about it. "We're tough on crime" is the PC Party line. In fact, they said a number of things in their Common Sense Revolution that they don't seem to be speaking much about any more. It has been exactly two years now — we've hit the two-year anniversary of the Mike Harris government — and we've seen instead a number of things that imply they're actually soft on crime, that their number one agenda is to cut taxes and in order to do that they'll borrow money and take money from needed programs that the public expects to receive.

When I think about police services, I think of that in terms of the taxes I pay and the taxes the people in Windsor-Sandwich pay. I feel, and I hope I represent my constituents, that I like paying taxes when I get value for my money. The issue then becomes, are we getting value for our money? A lot of people would agree that "Police services are the kind of service that I expect, that I want and that I am prepared to pay for." When we see those services being lessened in our communities, we are concerned, especially concerned because this is a government that campaigned on being tough on crime.

Interestingly, we just finished working with the Solicitor General in Bill 84, dealing with the fire services departments right across Ontario. That was another bill which was a clear disappointment for firefighters, for members of the public who are familiar with those fire-fighting services, where we had an expectation that this government, of all governments, was going to be doing things to enhance those services. What they're in fact doing is introducing legislation that becomes a toolkit to allow every city and town to take on more responsibility and continue what was always referred to as "unfunded mandates." You will provide the service and you will pay for the service. The province is pulling away from those funding mechanisms.

If we look in the law enforcement area, what Mike Harris said in his Common Sense Revolution — this is important, because one would think that Bill 105, a police services bill, is going to do something that actually enhances safety for all communities. That is not anything to do with Bill 105. What Mike Harris said in the Common Sense Revolution was: "Funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed... Any savings we find in our justice system through greater efficiencies will be reinvested to ensure public safety in our streets and homes." That's what Mike Harris said.

When we busy ourselves here taking up valuable legislative time, we expect to be dealing with legislation that has something to do with the promise he made during the campaign. What have we seen instead? The Solicitor General's budget cuts totalled \$41.2 million; the Attorney General had budget cuts of \$176 million. This was produced by the Liberal caucus, The Human Deficit, because we have seen clearly over the course of the last two years that that has been the effect of the budgets of this government, all for the sake of the tax cut. Those cuts include: \$17.1 million in cuts to the OPP; \$8.2 million in cuts to policing services; \$38 million in cuts to justice services; \$11.8 million in cuts to courts administration; \$8.3 million in cuts to legal services to the crown.

How interesting. Here we have a quote in the Common Sense Revolution: "Funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed." That's out the window. That's clearly a broken promise. In fact, they did that in their first year, never mind their second year. Given that the Attorney General is here, he says: "We will reform the legal aid program." Reform the legal aid program? If we're paying any attention to the kinds of calls we're getting in our constituency offices these days, we have people who are in dire need of assistance. They have nowhere to go. The only thing the government is able to tell them is, "Go find a lawyer," so naturally they try to go to the legal aid program.

1740

The legal aid programs across Ontario have been so restricted in the kinds of cases they're able to take that some very important matters now are left undefended for those members of the public who cannot afford a lawyer. That's why they created the legal aid system in the first place, so that in Ontario you would never find people without the ability to have justice.

There is a significant number of cases — I know the Attorney General is familiar with one case that keeps cropping up all the time. We were told that with this streamlining and increased efficiency, all this money was going to be reinvested in the system. That's a broken promise. None of it has come back into the system. All we see is this chronic lineup of people who are trying to have at a legal aid system, with no improvement in sight. We have staff people who work in the clinics across Ontario who are all overworked, who are forced to make these choices among cases, all of which are so critical.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): How much money was cut from the clinics, Sandra? Zero.

Mrs Papatello: I know the Attorney General would like to speak. I wish he would speak to this bill as well.

Let's give a perfect example of no reinvestment. Let me tell you what's happening. If a client is now on family benefits and that client also is separated or divorcing from their spouse, they have to go to the other spouse for supposed support. This can be done by going to Family Court — very costly — or to a parental support worker in the office of Comsoc, and they can draw up an agreement for support.

Here's what's happened in a memorandum that just came out, dated May 16. The memo was to court services managers about a revision to court fees. Let's look at who's paying now for this new, streamlined efficiency of government. I'll tell you who: the very parents on family benefits, usually moms, who are supposed to go to the spouse for support, but now they have a new \$50 fee. The Attorney General really should give me some reaction. I can't imagine you would be proud to go to the very mothers who don't have the funding in the first place, which is what landed them on family benefits. Here we are, Family Court, filing of a domestic contract, a new \$50 fee. These same parents, who are in no position to pay, are being forced to pay \$50 to do something that should have been available to them.

This is the kind of government we're dealing with, one that doesn't even make sense from one arm to the other, no logic, no straight line of thinking here, yet they were all elected, unfortunately, because they made promises, none of which are being kept.

Specifically to the bill and what the people had to say, what's interesting about the police association and the comments they made on this bill is that they were also supported by civilian groups. It's not just the police officers who had problems with the bill; it was also civilian groups who are very familiar with the legislation and who have worked within the system.

They're having trouble with the complaints process. Bill 105 removes the requirement to provide officers with full disclosure of the results of complaint investigations,

yet that right of notice is still there for the complainants. We're actually treating our police officers worse than members of the public. At the very least, we should have the same kind of benefits given to both members of the public and police officers. Are they not civilians too, at least for some part of the day?

The informal resolution of complaints: Bill 105 imposes restrictions on the resolution process. It prevents complainants and police officers from resolving complaints in an open, efficient and cost-effective manner. The members who spoke before me spoke very eloquently about this whole process and what ends up happening to those who are being complained against. Everything is referred to the police chief.

If we were in the 1950s and we hadn't really developed any kind of formalized structure of what governments should be leading communities to do, we wouldn't be surprised to see all the power being moved to the police chief, but in this day and age we cannot honestly say this is the kind of management style we want to support through legislation. Any time you have an organization, a city and town, that has a very respectable relationship between its police association and the police chief, they probably won't worry so much. But according to this government and according to their behaviour so far, they are creating what will be very acrimonious relationships. In fact, they are setting the stage through legislation to have one individual make all of those decisions.

When other members of our side have spoken about the civilian oversight that now is no longer there, what does that mean to me and the people of Windsor-Sandwich? That tells me there isn't a sense of trust, that if a member of the public has a problem, who has some kind of alleged complaint against a police officer, he or she will not have a sense that justice is being done, because it's all being hidden away under that police chief, behind closed doors, and it will be solely up to that one individual whether that complaint goes anywhere. I can tell you that historically police officers want to have that civilian oversight, not just members of the public. Police officers could always count on there being a real sense of trust in the system, that if someone is going to make a complaint against police officers, they knew there was due process.

When we had committee hearings our critic for this, David Ramsay, the member for Timiskaming, finally asked Mr Wood, "What is the process going to be like and how are you going to set the ground rules for it?" They pushed and pushed and never could get an answer. What is meant to actually save money, so the government thinks, is ultimately going to end up costing more money because the police officers have no recourse in any kind of informal resolution, hearings, appeals, because all that has been stripped away and given to the police chief. The only recourse for the police officer now is through the court system, more bogging down of the courts at a significant cost to the government and a significant cost to the police officer or the association where that individual is a member.

I don't think we can look at Bill 105 just in isolation. Last week in this House this government introduced legislation dealing with all the broader public sector and

making some pretty massive changes in the way relationships are going to be in all of this merging and downsizing of cities and towns across Ontario. How this impacts on the police, what this means is that in every county or city with neighbouring towns and townships, when they go about merging those services, they just toss their collective agreement into the air and say, "Here we go; we're going to start from scratch now, all the salary levels, benefits." It's not just that which impacts on the individual police officer, but standards of safety, methods of actually doing your job, all those things that are in those collectively bargained agreements, are out the window, given only a couple of things: One of the two groups, either the employer, the city or town, or the employees, can call and trigger the commission walking into that area and saying: "We'll make the decision now. Scrap that whole process."

The government introduced that kind of legislation last week and they did it on the basis that it's actually going to be fair and equitable and: "Don't worry, it's only a temporary commission. It's only going to be around until the year 2001, and after that you won't have to worry about it any more." Between now and the year 2001 we are going to have created, this government will have led, the most acrimonious time in labour relations that Ontario has ever seen. If this again were the 1950s, it would be perfectly acceptable that people hadn't been educated about what a real form of management and leadership style should be, that if we ask any police chief worth his or her salt, the police chief will tell you we have to work with all our partners in order to give good police service to our communities. There is a move afoot out there that involves community policing. It has been the wave, it will continue to be the wave of the future. All those things only happen when you have a very good level of morale, not just with the police chief but of course with the police officers. Bill 105 does nothing to enhance that. In fact, it does everything to try to destroy that.

I'm very disappointed, once again. The Solicitor General should have come right out in the beginning and said, "This is another part of the toolkit; this is how towns and municipalities are going to find savings even though you still have to provide police service to your communities." Instead, they wrap this up and call it fair and just and equitable and they make us look around to see that that's not the case at all. We've got real concerns.

Part of what is not in the bill is a description of what a police chief can call inappropriate conduct by a police officer, and that inappropriate conduct can actually result in some kind of suspension etc for those police officers. We asked again and again during the hearings, "What exactly would you classify as inappropriate behaviour, as misconduct, as unsatisfactory work?" It seems my city knew exactly what that was when information became available that this could actually be a cash cow for the towns and cities across Ontario. They could set a quota, and if the police officer didn't meet the quotas of having effected enough police tickets, traffic tickets etc, that police officer then could be punished for that.

I don't know how many of you have ever driven down south to Florida, but I have, and one of the states you go

through is Georgia. If there's anything that is anti-tourism, it's the reputation of the Georgia troopers — not that I've ever been stopped before by a police officer, but I will tell you they certainly have a reputation. I don't want that reputation in my province. I don't want Windsor, as the gateway, as the most significant trade spot in all of Ontario — nay, in Canada — I don't want us to be known to have that Georgia trooper style happening in my city. I don't want to see it. I don't think it's good for business, I don't think it's good for tourism, yet that's the kind of thing Bill 105 will allow for. They say: "Here we go. We're going to set the traps and we're going to put all that together."

I tend to drive back and forth when I go from Windsor to Toronto on a weekly basis. I will tell you that contrary to what was said in advance in the Common Sense Revolution, "We're going to have more men and women on the streets serving the public for safe communities and roads," I have not seen an increase in police officers on the road, and I'm on the road all the time. I can go past towns and cities three quarters of the way through, and sometimes the entire four-hour drive, and never see a police officer on the 401. The government promised we were going to have a better kind of feeling and safer feeling for roads. We don't have any of those things.

You talked about better truck safety as well. We saw what a joke that was, that the minister caught himself in a lie by saying all of a sudden, "Here we are, we're going to have these new, tough regulations for trucks." Then the Premier's office called and said: "Wait. We're having a fund-raiser. Don't do that to those trucking companies yet. Wait until our fund-raiser is over. Then we're going to water down that legislation and try to pass that off as if we're doing something great for the public."

The opposition parties are on to you, and we're on to all that. All of it is becoming just something you got elected on and nothing you're actually delivering on. If there's anything we can say in finishing, for a government that got elected because you thought you're tough on crime, you don't see any of that in Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker: By mutual consent, we will call the question. Mr Runciman has proposed third reading passage of Bill 105.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. We will have a five-minute bell. *The division bells rang from 1753 to 1758.*

The Acting Speaker: Mr Runciman has proposed third reading of Bill 105. All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hamick, Charles	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Saunderson, William
Bassett, Isabel	Johns, Helen	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Johnson, David	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Jordan, W. Leo	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Snobelen, John
Danford, Harry	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Leach, Al	Tascona, Joseph N.
Doyle, Ed	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Murdoch, Bill	Vankoughnet, Bill
Fisher, Barbara	Mushinski, Marilyn	Villeneuve, Noble
Fox, Gary	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Froese, Tom	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Palladini, Al	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Parker, John L.	Young, Terence H.
Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	
Hardeman, Ernie	Ross, Lillian	

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Pouliot, Gilles
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Boyd, Marion	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Castrilli, Annamarie	Kwinter, Monte	Wildman, Bud
Conway, Sean G.	Martel, Shelley	Wood, Len
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 58; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker: Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being 6 of the clock, the House will adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

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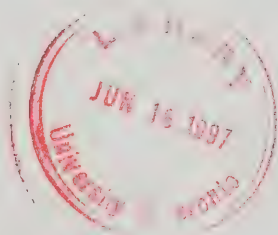
Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 10 June 1997

Mardi 10 juin 1997



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 juin 1997

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today I would like to inform the House and the people of Ontario about another Tory ripoff. This time the ripoff is on teachers because now they have to pay a \$90 annual fee to the College of Teachers: a College of Teachers, by the way, that they don't control, a College of Teachers, by the way, that they don't want.

But what makes this even worse is that this \$90 fee is being charged to those people who will benefit the least from the College of Teachers. I want to speak about retiring teachers, for they too last week were charged the \$90, even though they will receive no benefit from the College of Teachers. Occasional teachers, part-time teachers, what we used to call "supply teachers" are being charged the \$90, even though most of them haven't received one day's work over the course of the last year. They also have to pay the \$90. A ripoff? I think so.

But the most vulnerable group of teachers are the new teachers, the teachers without jobs, the teachers graduating from colleges of education. Those people have to pay the \$90 as well. Already mired in debt because of increased tuition fees because of this government, they too have to pay the new \$90 tax.

NORTHERN TRAIN SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Last week in this House I rose and asked a question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about the status of the Ontario Northland Railway, namely, the Northlander train. I've been doing some work over the last week talking to different people across northern Ontario and what is coming back is quite alarming.

It appears at this point that this government is not prepared to give in future months the kind of support financially that is needed to the ONTC to keep that train in place. The government needs to know — and they've got to understand this clearly — for many communities along the ONTC right of way, from North Bay all the way up to Cochrane and further on to Moosonee, it is the only way that people have to be able to get out of their communities to do anything from doing business to keeping a doctor's appointment. The ONTC is there to serve a purpose and it seems that this government is forgetting what it's all about.

There is another aspect about all of this that the government also needs to recognize, and that is the

tourism industry in northern Ontario in and along the ONTC right of way and going on to Moosonee. If you shut the Northlander down, you will not have anything to feed the Polar Bear Express when it comes to the trip going from Cochrane up to Moosonee. That community relies on the revenue that they're able to generate over the short summer months, to give employment to people within the community of Moosonee.

If this government shuts down the Northlander it's going to mean that the Polar Bear Express, one of the major attractions in northeastern Ontario when it comes to tourism, is going to be put at risk. I am asking this government to put on —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much.

DAIRY FARMERS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): The mindless government spending and burdening taxes for the people of Ontario is clearly over. This government has given a VIP invitation to business in this province to create partnerships promoting growth and increasing employment.

When this government stepped back from funding the seventh-inning stretch of Blue Jays games, it opened the gate for dairy farmers of Ontario to pour through. A program which cost the people of Ontario \$15,000 in 1995, before being withdrawn, is now giving the dairy farmers of this province an opportunity to be recognized. This program at all the ballparks fits well with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario's message, which promotes a healthy lifestyle.

Dairy Farmers of Ontario continue to provide resource material to Ontario teachers and ensure milk is available for all Ontario elementary and high school students. They also participate in promoting penalty-free playing in Ontario amateur hockey. This outlines only a few of the many programs dairy farmers in this province support. As a dairy farmer myself, I feel great pride in the recognition Ontario dairy farmers are getting through these programs.

The milk energy message at Blue Jays games fits well with the concept of the physical activity of the seventh-inning stretch. Last Sunday was designated as Dairy Farmers of Ontario Day at the ballpark. This is just one example of how business can expand, increase employment and support other businesses when government spends dollars wisely and concentrates on governing.

LEGISLATIVE CHANNEL

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): It was with great irony that I received this letter, dated June 1, in light of this current government's attempts to change

the rules of the House to prevent appropriate debate on issues.

"Dear Mrs Papatello,

"In 1986 when we received our cable, my father would watch the federal and Queen's Park channels before he went to work or after he got home, depending on what shift he was on at Ford. In 1992, I quit school to help my mother take care of him after he fell at work. Somewhere in 1993, I started to watch also. Other families have football or baseball to watch; we had this. Every day we would watch from 1:30 to 3 for question period or, as he called it, the comedy hour. We would watch as the members would yell things and get thrown out and he would yell things at the TV like, "Order" or "Quorum."

"This past March 9 he passed away. His name was Robert L. Wood. I am writing to ask you to give my thanks to the past and current members for hours and hours of excitement and chaos for us to watch. Also, give thanks to the current Speaker, because he was his favourite member.

"I also thank you for the above and for taking the time to read this letter. Once again, thank you.

"James Wood,

"Windsor, Ontario

"PS This was the only way I could think of to honour his memory, because I didn't have the heart to go see him one last time at IODE hospital."

I think it's indeed ironic to have received this today. We hope the government won't change the rules of the House.

1340

PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I rise today to recognize June 10 as Portugal Day, a day where we're able to join together and celebrate the history, culture and vibrancy of Portugal and its people.

My riding of Fort York is home to a large and vibrant Portuguese-Canadian community. There are currently more than 500,000 people of Portuguese origin living in Canada; 72% live in Ontario, the sixth-largest ethnic community in this province. The future of this community is its youth, with more than 40,000 Portuguese Canadian young people under the age of 24.

I would like to tell you about an event which was held in my riding over the weekend of May 23-25 at Harbord Collegiate. It was the Portuguese Canadian National Youth Conference sponsored by the Portuguese Canadian National Congress, entitled It's Time to Inherit the Future. It was the most dynamic and exciting exchange of ideas, as youth, parents and community members discussed the issues facing young people today. This conference is a prime example of the rich culture that is being created as Portuguese and Canadian legacies become intertwined. My sincerest congratulations go to the conference director Helen Filipe; the conference coordinator, João Rolo; and the entire coordinating committee for a truly exemplary effort.

Together we must all work to foster, strengthen and encourage these young people so they may follow the dreams of their ancestors. I would like to thank the

Portuguese Canadian community for its many contributions to our society and hope the voices for these young people continue as they inherit the future.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): It is my privilege to rise today to speak on the occasion of the celebrations of Portugal Day. I'd like to remind the House that I rise today not only as the member for Mississauga East but also as a member who today speaks on behalf of over half a million people of Portuguese heritage living in Ontario, people who have made their homes and live in the ridings represented by each and every member of this House. Statistics Canada ranks Portuguese as the fourth most predominant non-official language spoken in Canada.

This year the community is celebrating another successful year. Its political and economic strength has been recognized by the Prime Minister of Canada who, a few days prior to the election call, took significant measures to strengthen economic and trade ties between Canada and Portugal, thereby increasing tourism.

This year Canadians of Portuguese heritage are also celebrating their commitment to Canada. While others may be contemplating a way out of Canada, this community feels blessed for being part of this great country.

Please join me in welcoming all the guests in the gallery. Vive le Canada uni et libre ; vive le Portugal.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): My statement is directed to the Minister of Labour. The latest Ontario-Quebec agreement on construction labour mobility is not working out. When the agreement was signed, I said: "Let's give the agreement a chance. Let's wait and see."

We waited, and now we have the results. Last week in Montreal a construction work site was completely shut down by Quebec workers because of the 50 workers, four were from Ontario.

It is also apparent that this agreement does nothing for Ontario workers when you visit the Perley Bridge construction site in Hawkesbury. On this bridge that will link Ontario and Quebec, there are Quebec workers working on both sides of the border, but you can't find an Ontarian on either side. Actually, the only place where you will find Ontario workers is on the unemployment line. The Manpower office in Hawkesbury has a list of more than 1,500 workers who signed up to work on this major construction site but are sitting at home.

Minister, it is obvious that the new agreement is a failure. Ontario construction workers want to know what you will do to protect their livelihood against such discrimination.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is on the hospital cutbacks and health care cuts. This government is adding to the welfare roll several more people, and the cost of providing social programs to assist the laid-off people will far exceed any savings realized by the cuts to the James Bay General Hospital, which has been hit again by this government.

As it is right now, the communities on the coast of James Bay are so underserved that even a 4% cut, as recommended by your government, will have far-reaching and devastating effects on the delivery of health services to the coast.

The last round of cuts affected once more the support staff who are aboriginal people. These communities are already burdened with high unemployment rates. Their welfare rolls are full and the cost saving anticipated by the cuts will only be borne by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This government has to realize that it is not possible for the people affected by the cuts in this remote area to find other employment as it would be in a larger, more economically dynamic community.

The first nations are more than willing to cooperate to find a way to deliver an effective and efficient health care model on the coast. I urge this government, and specifically the Minister of Health, to visit these communities and see for themselves the current service delivery model and discuss all the options open to a more effective and efficient system, to deliver quality services to communities like Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan and all the other communities along the coast.

WINDERMERE HOUSE

Mr Bill Grimmitt (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): This past weekend was a special one for my riding of Muskoka-Georgian Bay and for the province of Ontario.

On February 27, 1996, after 125 seasons, Windermere House, a major Muskoka resort, was destroyed by fire. A wake was held in a local church as the community grieved its loss, but the dream to restore this beautiful tradition never died. Shortly after the fire it was amazing to see a petition circulating through the village of Windermere and beyond. The petition was an open letter of support for the owners as they prepared to rebuild. In just 10 months the resort was rebuilt, with an identical appearance to the original structure, making use of pictures gathered in the surrounding community and the recollections of past owners and tradesmen.

As we celebrated this reopening with a ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony on Saturday, it was a special pleasure to have the Premier and Mrs Harris there to participate and help promote the reincarnation of this symbol of Ontario's natural beauty. The Premier's presence underscored the great importance our government places on tourism and the need to continue developing our attractions.

This past weekend's events in my riding were a fitting start to this, Tourism Awareness Week, in Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS LEGISLATION

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Later today I will be introducing the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, 1997. This bill will merge the Ontario Insurance Commission, the Pension

Commission of Ontario and the deposit institutions division of the Ministry of Finance.

We are delivering on a commitment made in last month's budget. It is the latest in a series of steps taken by this government to streamline its own operation, making it more efficient and more accountable.

Our goal in creating this newly integrated commission is to provide more cost-effective and better coordinated regulation of financial services, thereby enabling the industry to better serve consumers and business. By reducing overhead and duplication and by sharing resources and knowledge, we expect to save \$3.8 million over the first two fiscal years. The new regulatory structure will provide flexibility to deal with the increasing trend towards integration of financial services.

We have consulted with stakeholders and have received broad acceptance of the proposed agency structure. In response to their concerns about the importance of an independent appeal process, the new commission's tribunal will provide expert, prompt and effective review of regulatory decisions on pension, insurance and other matters. Establishing this commission also lays the groundwork to further streamline regulation, reduce the regulatory burden and eliminate overlap with the federal government.

Ontario is not the first jurisdiction to create an integrated financial services regulator. Similar consolidation has already taken place in Quebec's Inspector General of Financial Institutions, British Columbia's Financial Institutions Commission and the federal government's Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions.

This bill is one of a number of important steps we are taking to make Ontario's regulation of financial services more efficient. As promised last November, we are also strengthening the Ontario Securities Commission. Last month I introduced budget legislation to make the OSC a self-funding organization. This will ensure that the Ontario Securities Commission has the resources it needs to maintain its position as the leading capital market in Canada and one of the best in the entire world.

We are streamlining licensing requirements for insurance companies and enhancing the Registered Insurance Brokers of Ontario's ability to regulate insurance brokers and protect consumers. Co-ops that do not issue shares or other securities will no longer have to file annual financial statements, reducing unnecessary paperwork and expense.

Creating the Financial Services Commission is another step towards providing smaller, more efficient and cost-effective government, better regulation of Ontario's financial services, improved consumer protection and maximizing the contribution of financial services to Ontario's economic growth.

1350

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I am pleased to rise today with yet another example of how this government has consulted with the people of Ontario, listened to their concerns and then acted to put the needs of seniors first. On behalf of

my colleague the Honourable Jim Wilson, Minister of Health, I am announcing that Ontario's seniors will benefit from an extended period of coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to thank the members opposite for their support for this addition.

This means that the benefit year beginning on April 1, 1997, will be extended to July 31, 1998, giving seniors an additional four full months of ODB coverage.

The government recognizes the contributions seniors have made in assisting us to ensure that this province's drug program remains the lowest-cost, most comprehensive plan in all of Canada. That is why today I am announcing that for seniors entering the program for the first time, the deductible they pay will be adjusted to reflect only the number of months for which they are enrolled in the program. Ontario can be proud of the fact that its drug plan is the lowest-cost, quality-assured plan of its kind.

Since June 1995 our government has added 465 new drug products to the ODB Formulary. This is in sharp contrast to the previous government, which chose to delist over 260 products from the formulary. As well, this government has streamlined the approvals process so that the latest and best drugs are added to the plan quickly. These improvements ensure that Ontario drug benefit recipients have access to the drug products they need.

This government has also lowered the deductible for the Trillium drug program. This has made 140,000 additional low-income Ontarians eligible for this benefit. In addition, seniors' groups, including United Senior Citizens of Ontario, met with Finance Minister Ernie Eves in pre-budget consultations on April 8 and urged the government not to increase the ODB copayment, and this government listened.

With today's announcement, we have listened again to concerns recently raised by seniors' groups about fairness in the implementation of the deductible. Today's announcement is in keeping with the changes we have made to the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary as it has been phased in. We also made refunds last summer to people incorrectly assigned to higher copayment categories based on federal government information.

To quote Mr Len Harrison, president of the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, to whom I spoke earlier today, "When you look at the whole package, it's a good result for seniors. This government has listened and it has acted quickly." We will continue to consult seniors and to act decisively to make improvements to our health programs to ensure that at all times Ontario receives the highest-quality services and programs. They deserve nothing less.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS LEGISLATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'll briefly respond to the Minister of Finance. You can tell by the retreat the government just made with the previous announcement that we'll be looking closely at this legislation. We are supportive of things that legitimately do reduce costs, but we are suspicious of big bureaucracies, and this government seems to like big bureau-

cracies. The megacity is an example. If this is simply a big bureaucracy we will have some concerns about it.

He's mentioned the Ontario Securities Commission. I think Ontario should recognize that we have before us a bill to establish an independent securities commission but that bill has not had one minute of debate in the Legislature. It has to be passed by July 1 or all of the Ontario trust companies go out of business. It is a strange way to run a government. If we do not pass a bill in three weeks, all the Ontario trust companies are out of business.

The reason I raise that is because you can imagine us in the opposition trying to deal with a government that should be responsible, and yet we find that three weeks from now all of our trust companies will go out of business. We had exactly the same thing on giving the government authority to spend money. Literally hours before they had to write the cheques, they were here in the Legislature looking for authority to spend money when they could have had it months before.

We will be looking forward to the specifics of the legislation. If it meets the rhetoric of the minister's statement, of course we'll be supportive, but until we get into the detail I think Ontario has a right to be suspicious of any legislation this government brings forward.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I am delighted to have had the opportunity to listen to the minister today make a complete retreat from what they have done to the seniors in Ontario. This is a day for seniors in Ontario to be proud. This is a day they have shown the government that it was wrong, and the government has admitted today, shamefully, that it was wrong to pick the pockets of seniors in Ontario. We have to agree that this is a day of shame for the government of Ontario.

This is not a time when they consulted with and listened to the seniors. This is a day when they recognized that they had put the seniors at the bottom of the barrel. If it wasn't for the seniors who came to Queen's Park, if it wasn't for us, who told you told constantly that what you're doing is wrong, you wouldn't have done anything.

So when I hear that they listened to the people and they acted, if it wasn't for the seniors, they wouldn't have done anything. This is a time when they have to recognize what the seniors have been saying, and it's not to recognize seniors in such a way. If they had been polite and nice to the seniors of Ontario, they wouldn't have said, "Pay us for 12 months and we'll compensate you for eight and a half months."

This is a win for the seniors of Ontario and I'm delighted that the government had to make a full retreat, knowing full well that it made a mistake, that it wanted to cheat the seniors in Ontario. Today I'm pleased on behalf of the seniors.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): It is with pleasure that I rise to acknowledge the remarks of the sometime minister for seniors affairs today. Was this a retraction on the part of a heartfelt rethinking by the government? After 71 days of being requested by seniors' organizations, by the members of this House, over and over again, no one — the minister for seniors issues, the

Minister of Health, the Premier — would act for seniors. Finally, as things must be, the lesson from this and the retraction, taking away the drug ripoff of seniors — and each member on the other side of the House sat silent for 71 days until seniors, to add insult to injury, had to organize themselves, bring themselves down to Queen's Park and bring this government to account.

I want to let you know, Minister, that the \$170 million you've cut from the drug program is not what seniors are going to sit still for. The seniors aren't going to sit still for the copayment. If you want to add some dignity to your retreat today, you'll agree to meet with seniors and take away the unfair charges you're putting on them for drugs. Congratulations to seniors; nothing due to this government yet.

1400

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I am very pleased that this government has gone into full retreat on this issue around the charges for the Ontario drug plan for seniors. This really is, as the opposition has suggested, a victory for those who have been trying to explain to this government how incompetently they have put together this program from the beginning. We all remember the chaos last summer when people were classified in the wrong way and couldn't get through to get reclassified. The minister says proudly today that they have refunded the money to those incorrectly assigned last year.

They have had to jiggle and wiggle around to try and show that they know what they're doing, and the reality is that no one is clear they do. We know that the seniors know what is best for them. The seniors took political action. They came out and this minister has taken this action today to try and forestall what was going to be a very big public relations problem for him and his government around the unfair charging of those months of ODB coverage.

This minister, again and again, talks about how wonderful this government has been with regard to the drug program because they put 465 new products on, and they constantly talk about the fact that we did delist a number of products. The minister knows very well we delisted those on the advice of a joint committee and that many of the products that were delisted were completely out of time in terms of value to the patient. Many of those products were laxatives which were found to be damaging to those patients. Many of those products should never have been covered by the insurance plan at all. It was the joint committee that looked at the effect of overdrugging of patients, the interaction of drugs for patients, that recommended those materials be delisted.

Let us be very clear: Yes, it is good that new materials, new drugs, new products that are coming available and that are useful, that the committee does feel are therapeutically useful to people, should be added to the plan and should be added quickly, but let us stop trying to make hay out of the delisting of products that are not useful and that may be therapeutically harmful to people, which are the products that were delisted by the previous government.

Let us be very clear that this minister ought to be very wise to understand that the only way he is going to make

the targets that are in his estimates around the ODB program for next year will be by looking very hard at what this program pays for and what it doesn't pay for, and I expect we will see some more delisting of products that are not therapeutically sound for patients as well.

This minister has again and again tried to make hay about his close friendship with seniors. He departed from his prepared speech today — which, I remind you, Mr Speaker, ministers are not supposed to do in statements — to try and make political hay around a quotation from one of the advocates for senior citizens. I say to him very clearly: You may have praise today, but it doesn't cover up the incompetence that you have shown.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS LEGISLATION

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): We too agree in principle with the announcement from the Minister of Finance. We agree with \$3.8 million of taxpayers' money being saved. We also agree with the streamlining; better late than never.

We suspect that these kinds of negotiations, however tedious, were held under the veil of secrecy. We will be asking for an explanation vis-à-vis co-ops not being required to file financial statements. I guess accountants get in the way, accountants slow things down, so under the guise of streamlining we can get rid of that.

I want to remind the minister that page 42 of the budget document — not the budget speech — promised to address the dilemma that some Ontarians have faced under the life income fund. This is the mechanism, the key that generates the money coming in from locked-in retirement arrangements. You have made a commitment that you would address that, because some people, by virtue of the cap, don't have access to the money that they have spent a lifetime working for.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I beg to inform the House I have today laid upon the table the 1996-97 annual report of the Ombudsman of Ontario, who has joined us here today. Welcome.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today a Portuguese delegation headed by the secretary of state for Portuguese communities overseas, Mr Jose Lello; the consul general of Portugal, Mr Antonio Montenegro; and Count Botelho. Welcome.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): On Thursday, June 5, the member for Beaches-Woodbine raised a point of order with respect to the orderliness of Bill 136, An Act to provide for the expeditious resolution of disputes during collective bargaining in certain sectors and to facilitate collective bargaining following restructuring in the public sector and to make certain amendments to the

Employment Standards Act and the Pay Equity Act. The government House leader and the member for Algoma also made submissions.

At the outset, I want to acknowledge that the issue of orderliness surrounding omnibus legislation has been raised in this House on a number of occasions. Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, and more recently Bill 47, the Tax Cut and Economic Growth Act, were the subject of Speaker's rulings in 1995 and 1996. These rulings enunciated certain principles relating to omnibus bills.

First, as with any ruling, in considering action with respect to an omnibus bill, the Speaker must first determine the bounds of his or her authority. To date, I know of no Speaker in any jurisdiction who has, on his or her own initiative, either caused a bill to be split or who has ruled a bill out of order because of its omnibus nature. That is not to say, as Speaker Lamoureux did, that a Speaker may not one day be faced with a piece of legislation that goes beyond what has been procedurally acceptable.

Second, the Speaker must determine whether or not the contents of a bill fall within the umbrella of a theme of relevancy. Beauchesne defines relevancy in this context, in part, as follows:

"Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy among the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill."

I agree with Beauchesne's definition to a point. However, as the member for Beaches-Woodbine and the member for Algoma argued, a bill cannot necessarily be saved by its title, no matter how long or all-encompassing it purports to be. For example, I would be hard-pressed to accept a bill that encompasses an entire legislative agenda simply because it was entitled "An Act to implement the provisions of the Speech from the Throne." A theme of relevancy is not achieved simply by virtue of what a bill's title says the bill does, or by the number of ministries a bill touches upon. A theme of relevancy is achieved when all the parts of the bill are linked in a tangible way.

While it is therefore possible to envisage a circumstance where a Speaker might be faced with no option but to break with tradition and rule an omnibus bill out of order, a Speaker would have to determine without doubt that a theme of relevancy does not exist.

Having reviewed Bill 136 carefully, and considering omnibus bills that in the past have been ruled in order, I do not find that the parts of this bill are so different as to have no connection to each other and therefore find the bill to be in order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Environment. Minister, you will be aware that today a number of environmental

groups have formally requested that an investigation be held into the dumping by Ontario Hydro over the past many years of over 2.5 million pounds of toxic chemicals, including copper, zinc and tin, into Lake Ontario. I want to tell you, Minister, that I support their request.

I understand full well that Ontario Hydro is conducting its own investigation into this matter, but I would submit to you that it is your responsibility as Minister of Environment to conduct or to ensure that a full and independent inquiry is conducted into this mess. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I first want to clarify to the Leader of the Opposition that copper and zinc are not considered toxic materials. As you know, we all have copper in our homes and therefore we are all subject to some traces of copper —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

1410

Hon Mr Sterling: I think it's important that we get the facts straight here because the Leader of the Opposition is perhaps putting out the spectre that there's a problem with drinking water in every home because they have copper tubing in their homes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): You should resign, Norm.

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm sorry. The truth is the truth with regard to this matter.

This is a serious matter. There is a process to go through. We have been looking into this matter. Ontario Hydro is looking into this matter —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Sterling: — and when we have all the facts, we will take the appropriate action.

Mr McGuinty: You cannot shirk your responsibility in this matter. The fact of the matter is that zinc, copper and tin are toxic, persistent and they bioaccumulate. We're not talking about a few kilograms here; we're talking about two and a half million pounds which have been dumped into Lake Ontario. Hydro didn't report these emissions over the years, notwithstanding the fact that it was aware they were taking place. Hydro didn't initiate its own inquiry until this matter was made public.

What we're talking about here now, what you're saying, is that it's okay for the offender to conduct the investigation into the offence. That's what you're saying is acceptable, and I'm saying to you that is not acceptable.

You are charged with a special responsibility for protection of our natural environment. In that light, what I want you to do now is to stand up in this House and say you're going to assume that responsibility and you're going to ensure that you're going to conduct a full and independent inquiry into these emissions.

Hon Mr Sterling: Again, I wish the Leader of the Opposition would not put forward facts which are not borne out by science. Zinc and copper are not bioaccumulative. They are not, and that is a very serious allegation with regard to the character of the substances which he's talking about. Unfortunately, those facts are just not borne out by scientific evidence.

I am taking this matter seriously. There is a process which is under way with regard to whether an investigation should take place. We already have my science and standards branch looking into the matter. I understand as of today there's an application to the Environmental Commissioner to undertake an investigation. We have been phoning the Environmental Commissioner this morning to forward to us the application as soon as possible so that we can act upon it.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm absolutely amazed that this Minister of the Environment would sit here in 1997 and believe that lead and zinc are not dangerous to the waters in Ontario, that they're not dangerous to people with the accumulation that has occurred. I find it amazing that he would suggest that.

Clearly what has happened over the years — and there's plenty of evidence to suggest there's been a major coverup at Ontario Hydro — there has been a coverup to the ongoing dumping that has occurred, Minister, and you have responsibility to get to the bottom of this. It is not good enough that Hydro is investigating itself. We have long abandoned the practice of police investigating police. We have long abandoned practices of ministries investigating themselves.

By you sitting here and trying to skate around this, Minister, you're agreeing with what has happened over the years. You have a responsibility. The request this morning was very clear. What organizations and environmental groups across Ontario are requesting is an independent investigation into what has happened at Ontario Hydro. Will you agree today to carry out an independent, third-party investigation into the ongoing at Ontario Hydro and this coverup that has occurred over the years?

Hon Mr Sterling: The role of the Minister of Environment is similar to the role of the Solicitor General or whatever with regard to investigations and charges which might be laid. The minister is not involved with those decisions. The investigation and enforcement branch of the Ministry of Environment has been lauded by the Environmental Commissioner for its procedures, its decisions and its independence, and I intend to protect that particular reputation which it has had in the past. They will have all the data to make the necessary decisions as per the EBR act.

The member opposite talks about lead. Lead is not even under consideration with regard to this particular problem. I wish the members opposite would talk about the scientific facts, the actual procedures, and not scare the people of Ontario beyond what is reasonable.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday in this House my colleague the member for Port Arthur raised an issue with you which I think is very important, and I want to return to that.

He told you about a young couple who live in his riding, who are the parents of two young children, a two-and-a-half-year-old and an eight-month-old, who suffer from a very rare skin disease. They suffer from this disease which doesn't allow them to go outside during

the day. If they did go outside on a day like today, for instance, they would suffer third-degree burns.

In order to control their exposure, these parents are asking for a light meter and they're asking you to help them meet the cost of putting a special coating on the windows, because the kids suffer severe burns even while inside the house. They can't afford to incur that expense on their own, so they're asking for your help.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The question, please.

Mr McGuinty: Yesterday you put some nice comments on the record, but when the microphone wasn't on you said, "I think they should hold a fund-raiser." What I want you to do is to stand up now and apologize for saying that and commit —

The Speaker: Thank you, leader.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Yesterday the question was that I hadn't responded. In fact, the honourable member who asked the question had received a letter from me several days ago, dated May 29. I cannot comment on the case because it is an individual case. If at the end of the day the government is not able to fund the construction of the house and the renovations required, then yes, I would suggest that the community rally together, as we do thousands of times across the province, and try to help this family out. I will personally make a donation.

Mr McGuinty: This is very telling. This is a case of young parents who have two kids who are very, very sick. They have accepted their responsibility in life. They love those kids; they care for them; they nurture them, and they're asking for just a little bit of help from the government — not a hell of a lot in the grand scheme of things. This minister is saying they're on their own. "They need money for their sick kids? Too damned bad about them. Go out there and fund-raise." You know something? In their community they have already raised over \$28,000 for other expenses which they themselves have defrayed. They're looking for \$20,000; that's all they're looking for.

Do you know how many other kids suffer from this in the province of Ontario? None. These parents are really on their own and they're just looking for a little bit of help from you. They don't give a damn about a tax cut. All they want is a bit of money to help their kids. Will you stand up and commit to that?

Hon Mr Wilson: So that the family in question doesn't get misled — I have no idea what a tax cut has to do with this — revenues are up in the province of Ontario, so there's more money coming in to pay for health care, in spite of your Liberal cousins in Ottawa cutting us by \$2.1 billion.

I want to say to the honourable member, how do you get up every day, when your federal cousins have cut us by \$2.1 billion, and honestly face your constituents and look the people of Ontario in the eyes? How do you do that, I ask the honourable member?

1420

Mr McGuinty: Minister, just for a moment I want you to put the calculator aside. I want you to understand what these parents are feeling, I want you to understand their struggle and I want you to understand their lot in life.

The kids may reach the age of 18 because the numbers show that when you have kids who suffer from this they don't generally live beyond the age of 18. The parents have accepted their lot in life and all they want is just a little bit of help from their government. They need \$20,000 to buy a light meter and to help put a special coating on the windows of the house so the kids don't get burned when they're inside the house. Now I want you to stand up in this House today and tell me that's something you're going to support because it's the right thing to do.

Hon Mr Wilson: First of all, the politicians will not make this decision. It is a medical case; it will be decided by the experts, so to keep making politics out of this — I tell you I ran in this province, I ran in my constituency, we ran to take the politics out of health care and you keep putting it in.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Opposition members, I know this is a difficult issue but the government members allowed your leader to put the question without a peep. I would ask you to give the same consideration to the minister.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): In spite of what he says.

The Speaker: Member for Fort York, thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: I can't share the details of the case with the honourable member but I assure you that if the experts who review the program and the application to the program — and by the way, it was fully explained to him what's required in the May 29 letter and I hope he's given that to his constituents, and I can't even tell you whether we're waiting for the information back from his constituents or not —

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): There is no letter.

Hon Mr Wilson: I gave him another copy yesterday.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: Well, I did. I had it right here. It was sent over to you. I don't know what happened to it. Anyway, the end of the matter is that the experts will decide. If the doctors in the case and the experts who review the assistive devices program and other programs recommend it, we will fully pay for the renovations as we always do.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A question to the Attorney General: Today we received the Ombudsman's report into your bungling and destruction of the family support plan. It's a devastating report. The Ombudsman says your decision to lay off 85% of the staff last August caused hardship for the very children and women the plan was intended to serve, yet every time we raised the issues of how many children were going without support payments, you said these were isolated cases, that the plan was working better than ever.

Minister, your performance has been shameful. The punishment you have inflicted on the innocent children and women across this province is unforgivable. Will you now do the decent thing, finally, and resign because of your bungling and incompetence?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): No, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): That disdain reflects the total lack of concern this Attorney General has for the victims he's created by virtue of his gross mishandling. He's apologized for the inconvenience to family support plan clients, but look what the Ombudsman says:

"I hope they're not ignoring need but it's difficult to conclude otherwise right now, but I hope they'll listen as they put in place the restructuring initiatives they're talking about. I see ahead, if they don't listen, confusion; people who were previously not vulnerable becoming vulnerable. That's what you had in the family support plan: people who maybe by definition weren't poor going into the system became vulnerable because of government unfairness. We may have more of that."

The Attorney General just didn't inconvenience people, he victimized thousands of women and their kids. When is he going to accept responsibility and accept his responsibility as the Attorney General and go beyond merely apologizing for inconvenience, but before he hurts more women and their kids, resign?

Hon Mr Harnick: It bears noting that the Ombudsman has made certain recommendations. If the member cares to ask her, we've followed those recommendations, implemented those recommendations and that has been of great assistance in improving the family support plan.

The other thing that bears noting is that the family support plan has been racking up \$100 million in debt, on average, for about the last 10 years, when the former Liberal government and the NDP government were running that plan.

We now have a bill that will permit us to begin to start, for the first time, to enforce support orders, to report to credit bureaus, this fall begin the suspension of drivers' licences, now be able to collect money in lump sums that were no longer able to be accessed. Certainly we've worked with the Ombudsman to implement her recommendations and improve the family support plan.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Minister, from day one you have tried to blame other governments, computer glitches, payors, employers, everyone else, for the mistake you made. It was you and you alone who decided it was more important to finance the tax cut on the backs of women and children than to ensure families got the support they were entitled to. You made the decision to close the eight regional offices of the family support plan. You laid off 290 staff in a single day. That's your legacy.

The Ombudsman has said in her report that the "family support plan was wrong in its failure to ensure an adequate level of service for its clients, retain sufficient trained personnel to ensure provision of essential services, monitor its enforcement actions, adequately notify its clients of the availability of, and eligibility criteria for, reimbursement of expenses incurred."

This report is damning, Minister, of your decisions and your conduct and how that impacted on thousands and thousands of families right across this province. Why

don't you, for a change, accept responsibility for what you did and resign today?

Hon Mr Harnick: I have indicated that we had considerable difficulties during the transition, and we have worked with the Ombudsman to correct the problems to the point where we now are able to answer 50% of the callers who try to access the plan. The plan is now disbursing 12% more money to women and children than it did a year ago. Some 95% of the payments the plan is making are doing it within 24 to 48 hours. We're receiving letters thanking us that the plan is now able to do more than it's ever done before.

We are addressing the most fundamental problem and that's to change the family support plan from a cheque clearing house to a real enforcement agency that can collect the debt the previous two governments didn't care about. We are now going to try and collect money for women and children the other two parties have written off. We are going to do that. We are implementing that. We have \$5 million in increased budget —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I have a question to the government House leader, but I would say to the Attorney General, never have we seen someone refuse to accept responsibility like this.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): House leader, I asked the Premier about the conflict-of-interest situations being caused by your privatization policy. Both you and the Premier seem remarkably unconcerned, despite the case of Carl Vervoort, who was found by your own investigation to be in violation of the Public Service Act. With your policy of privatization, we are going to see more and more cases of conflict of interest, more and more cases where the taxpayer will wonder, "Who is protecting my interests?" Who is ensuring that your privatization process doesn't result in situations where private companies make a profit and taxpayers lose?

Minister, are you saying you're not going to bring in legal measures to protect the public interest? You said back on April 23 that it was important. Are you now saying you're not going to bring in a new law to protect the public interest in these privatization situations?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): We've made it abundantly clear that the procedures we inherited from the government represented by the leader of the third party were not adequate, were not sufficient.

On April 23 I stood in this in this House and announced that the government would introduce Management Board directives associated with new conflict-of-interest guidelines pertaining to employees of agencies, boards and commissions, senior staff of the various ministries and political staff. In addition, we indicated that we would introduce the lobby registration legislation. Those principles are in place today; those principles are being observed today and are there for the protection of the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you're trying to steal your notes from the Attorney General about pushing off responsibility on someone else. It doesn't work. It's your privatization policy which is allowing people to get insider information and then go out there and join the private sector company they just negotiated a contract with. No one who looks at this objectively would let it pass. Everyone who has looked at this kind of privatization process that you've started says it won't protect taxpayers, won't protect the public interest.

What are you going to do? Carl Vervoort negotiated the contract, then went out to the private sector and is benefiting from the contract he negotiated while he was in the public service. You can't do a thing about him with your guidelines. You don't know how much he may stand to profit eventually. You don't know how much he may take advantage of the system eventually.

When are you going to bring in legislation? After the problem is out there everywhere in the province? Are you going to protect the public interest or are you going to worry about your private sector friends? Which is it?

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite has a habit of making wild allegations. We've already heard those with regard to the casino corporation. The Premier yesterday indicated that we have a letter that indicates that the member should check his facts in that particular case.

Again in this particular instance of an investigation that was taking place, the member is indicating that some particular individual has negotiated a contract — completely false. He throws out wild allegations on the floor of this House and assumes they're facts when they're not.

This government has taken action, unlike the previous government, which had this same issue before it. Did it take any action? Absolutely none.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon David Johnson: This government has taken action. We introduced Management Board directives on the floor of this House on April 23 which are in effect today; the principles are in effect today. This government has taken action, announcing lobbyist legislation which will be in place later this year to protect the —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Minister, clearly you are trying to pass the blame to somebody else, just as the Attorney General has done over and over again when it comes to the family support plan. The fact is, it is your government that is moving to privatize these services and it is incumbent upon your government to make sure there are proper conflict-of-interest guidelines to protect the public from such abuses.

I have yet another case. In northeastern Ontario, where your government is now moving to privatize the Ministry of Transportation road maintenance services, your ministry went to the employees and tried to answer questions from the union. I want to respond by way of the document I got from the union about what your ministry, the Ministry of Transportation, had to say about privatization for contracts that haven't even been awarded yet.

"Will offers of employment come from the contractor or the ministry?" The answer from the ministry is that

IMOS will contact the individual employees to make job offers. The contract hasn't even been awarded and your ministry is already saying the job offers will come from IMOS.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Mr Bisson: The question is simply this: Clearly your government has to have in place conflict-of-interest guidelines —

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister?

Hon David Johnson: It's a bit curious that representatives of the previous government are up with such rage on something they clearly had the opportunity to deal with. They didn't. This government inherited this situation, found it to be wanting and brought in guidelines, guidelines under which a member of the civil service, for example, if they have had significant dealings with a particular firm, cannot switch from the civil service to that private sector firm within 12 months. If they have worked on a file in the government, they cannot shift to the private sector and work on that same file.

That is in force and effect today. That's what we've been working on. That's what we've introduced. That's what's going to protect the people of the province, along with the lobbyist legislation. The previous government had the choice, had the opportunity to do that and did not do it. We have done it.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the response the Minister of Health gave to the Leader of the Opposition recently, he stated that a letter was delivered to me yesterday. This was not the case. I want to make it very clear. I have checked with my office. No letter was delivered to me.

The Speaker: Thank you. That's not a point of order.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Attorney General. I want to return to the issue of the family support plan. For 10 months now, we have been raising our concerns about the family support plan. We knew from the time you shut down the regional offices that there was going to be chaos, and week after week we've brought the stories of that chaos into this House, stories of women who literally could not pay the rent or buy groceries because their cheques were so late, stories of support-paying parents who were having deducted more than their court order, stories of money that's meant for children sitting in banks, all because you couldn't get your act together.

Now the Ombudsman has investigated this. She has agreed that this plan has been a mess. She has said that you should apologize to the clients for the hardship you've caused by your failure to provide an adequate level of service. More than that, she has recommended that you take steps to make sure that clients are reimbursed for the expenses that were incurred because of your delays. Exactly what will you do to make sure that every client is reimbursed for the expenses caused by your making such a mess of this?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We have indicated to

clients of the family support plan that if they have incurred expenses, they should submit those expenses and we will deal with the expense claims as sent in. Certainly that has been conveyed, and we have discussed that with the Ombudsman, who was satisfied with the solutions we implemented.

Mrs McLeod: The problem the Ombudsman did not deal with in her report today is that this program is still in a mess, despite all the words and all the assurances that the minister provides. Those of us who are working in constituency offices know we are still flooded by concerns from people who cannot get their family support. My own office has 21 cases outstanding as we speak. My constituency assistant sits on a phone for two afternoons a week just trying to get those cases dealt with. An individual client doesn't have a chance, and every member of this House knows that is a fact.

The Ombudsman says to evaluate the experience, but we know what happened. We know that you closed down the regional offices because you had to cut costs just for the sake of cutting costs. We know there was a problem with the family support plan. You didn't understand the problem, and your cuts made the problem worse. It's not enough to just evaluate the problem and know where you made your mistake; you've got to fix it. I ask you today, will you go back to square one? Will you fix the mess by reopening the regional offices and get this right now?

Hon Mr Harnick: It bears noting that over 80% of all cheques that the family support plan now handles go through electronic banking. The plan can now be in a position to deal with what the plan should be dealing with: the collection of arrears.

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Anyone who thinks this plan has operated in a successful way at any time is very wrong, because this plan has created \$100 million in debt annually for women and children. We are now dealing with creating an enforcement agency that can successfully —

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): So what's the point?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Blame everyone else, eh, Charles? Blame everyone else.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. First, I want the members for Sudbury East and Welland-Thorold to come to order. Plus, member for Welland-Thorold, that comment is out of order. I would ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Kormos: I withdraw my appeal to Harnick to try telling the truth for once.

The Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold, I'll give you one more opportunity; it's withdraw or don't withdraw. The option is yours, but I'd ask you to make the decision.

Mr Kormos: Withdraw.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Harnick: We are now disbursing more money at a faster rate than the plan has ever disbursed before. The very essence of what we're trying to do is collect money that has accumulated by way of debt at a rate of \$100 million a year. If the parties opposite think that's a measure of success, I can tell you I totally disagree with them. They're absolutely wrong.

We're going to try to reverse that trend by running the family support plan —

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, I recently asked you in this Legislature to take responsibility for the Ontario Hydro discharge of toxic metals from its nuclear plants and order an independent investigation.

First you tried to hide behind the fact that no citizen had asked you to investigate. Well, today they have, and what do we hear from you today? Now you are, incredibly, trying to hide behind the independent nature of the Environmental Bill of Rights. It is your job to protect the environment. Stop hiding and making excuses. Will you announce an independent investigation now, today?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): As I said before, there is a process. I think it's important for the Minister of Environment to follow that process with regard to any charge or any investigation or any look into an investigation that a citizen or an event might bring forward. I don't think I should be going down to my investigations branch and saying, "Undertake an investigation" or not. The Environmental Bill of Rights puts forward a process whereby the director and the assistant directors get together and make that kind of decision. That process, I was told this morning, has begun. I think we should follow that process through.

Ms Churley: Minister, you seem to forget that you are responsible for Hydro. Your answer today to previous questions and previously when you stated that copper and zinc are not toxic and indeed are good for fish remind me of a previous Tory environmental minister, Morley Kells, saying that a PCB spill on the highway was not a big deal but it might hurt rats if they wandered on to the highway. It's the same kind of response.

That huge a quantity of copper and zinc are persistent and bioaccumulate in fish. It can take up to 100 years to go away. There also appears to be a deliberate coverup by Hydro with the falsification of numbers. This is a very serious matter. This is not your routine little environmental problem; this is big. This is very serious, and you sit there and try to fob it off on somebody else.

I'm asking you again, because this is not going to go away, will you announce an independent investigation today? Take responsibility; it's your job.

Hon Mr Sterling: The member is incorrect. Copper and zinc at these levels are not toxic. The levels we're talking about are one hundredth of the drinking quality standards in Ontario set by her government, the previous government. I'm sorry, the member is wrong; copper and zinc are not bioaccumulative. There is not a drinking water problem.

However, as I said to the member in my first response, we are following a consistent process which I think it is important to do in terms of enforcement matters, to ensure that all citizens, be they government-controlled or not government-controlled, are treated consistently. I will

do that as the minister, I will fulfil my responsibilities as a minister, and that is the correct way to act in this matter.

JOB CREATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is for the Minister of Finance, and it relates to the recent news reports of more jobs being created, which is an indication of the improving economy in Ontario. I'm hearing that Ontario is creating 1,000 jobs every day.

Like so many parents, I've been concerned with the current lack of job prospects for our youth. Over the past few days I've read several newspaper articles with encouraging job statistics. I have had optimistic quotes from young people like Rebecca Archibald after finding job prospects better than in previous years.

However, after all this good news, there are still those pessimists out there. Some continue to paint a bleak picture on employment and the economic forecast. Minister, could you give this House and my constituents of Durham East an update on Ontario's economy and jobs?

Interjections.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Never have I received so much advice about how to answer a question.

As the member will know, the Ontario economy has created more than 100,000 net new jobs in the last three months alone. This is the equivalent of well over 1,000 jobs a day being created in the province. There are more people working in Ontario today than ever before in its history, some 5.403 million people working in the province, and 65% of those jobs in the last three months Canada-wide have been created right here in Ontario.

No less an authority than Paul Martin, the finance minister of Canada himself, projects that employment will increase by a minimum of 300,000 to 350,000 in Canada this year. The recent Nortel announcement —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister, we'll have to wait for the supplementary.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for that very comprehensive response, Minister.

Our government's plan has been working hard to cut taxes, eliminate red tape and create opportunity, hope and jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: It is evident in my riding of Durham East that there is new business growth. An article which appeared yesterday in the Toronto Star indicated that small business could be saved if only the federal government would examine the EI premiums and their reduction for this province.

Interjections.

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Mr O'Toole: It's clear that good news isn't being widely received here today. Minister, could you comment on how the level of employment insurance actually affects the status of job creation in Ontario?

Hon Mr Eves: Payroll taxes obviously affect job creation numbers, not only in Ontario but indeed in any

province. As members will know, by the end of this year there will be a surplus in the federal EI account of some \$12 billion. While I can appreciate as much as anybody the need for prudence and fiscal planning, surely \$12 billion is more than a sufficient surplus to account for any shortfall that may occur in future years.

There is room for the federal government to lower EI premiums to \$2.20, where they started in the first place. This would create literally hundreds of thousands of jobs across Canada, especially here in Ontario. I would urge my colleagues opposite to encourage Mr Martin and their federal colleagues to do the same.

NORTHWESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a question for the Minister of Health. As you have said in this House, a community hospital doesn't belong to the government; it doesn't belong to the restructuring commission; it belongs to the people in the community.

With the ordered closing of Northwestern hospital, it is beyond belief that my community received a letter wherein your hospital restructuring commission denied them a right to a hearing whereby they could plead their case for the hospital they built with their blood, sweat and tears, brick by brick, bed by bed. Your restructuring commission said, "We won't even give you an hour of time to hear you."

Do you agree with that position taken by your restructuring commission not to give the builders of the hospital, the owners of the hospital, even an hour to hear their case?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Whether I agree or disagree is irrelevant. I cannot interfere in the proceedings of the commission.

Mr Colle: The scary thing is we're about to lose 10 community hospitals in Toronto. Hospitals, as you have said, belong to our communities. They belong to the volunteers, the people who had fund-raisers, the people who volunteered there on a daily basis. They're about to lose their hospitals.

You're in charge of this commission; you appointed them. The buck stops at your desk. How can you not stand up and say in this House to at least give the community an hour to be heard and plead their case? How can you say you won't even allow that hearing? As minister, please say something about giving the builders, the owners of the hospital, a hearing.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member is extremely unfair in his question. I don't give them the hearing and I did not say I would not give them a hearing. I cannot interfere in the work of the commission, and the honourable member understands that.

What I would say to the party opposite is, how can you defend a system where a third of the hospitals in Metro Toronto are empty, yet our waiting lists for services are growing every day? Buildings don't cure people; people cure people.

In spite of the \$2-billion cut from your federal Liberal cousins, we spend 20% more per person on health care in this province than any other jurisdiction in Canada, yet we have waiting lists. Why? Because we have money tied

up in redundant bricks and mortar, in duplication, in excessive administration. We need less of that stuff and more services for people. That is what the commission is doing. That is what all of us should be doing to improve the health care system.

CARIBANA

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Citizenship. It concerns Caribana, North America's largest cultural festival, and the fact that it's celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

The minister will know that Caribana is a success story, culturally and economically. It's a generator of jobs and revenues. It has enormous potential to generate summer jobs for youth. It already provides significant revenues for small business. It is a magnet for tourism, with the parade drawing an attendance of over a million people from across North America.

But this year all of this is at risk all because of a logistical dispute over security with the Metro Toronto Police. We asked you about this last week. The situation still isn't resolved. It's absurd to cancel the biggest cultural event in North America because of a logistical problem. Will you step in now and show some leadership and bring the Metro Toronto Police back to the table so that the parade can go on?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): It is my understanding that the CCC and local officials are continuing to try to meet to resolve this particular issue. Certainly our government encourages the committee to continue working with Metro police, the Metro government and indeed the city of Toronto. But it would be inappropriate of me personally to interfere with the workings of the local police because this matter falls within their jurisdiction. I can tell you, however, that the Premier has indicated that he is going to get his staff to contact Chairman Tonks and Caribana officials to see if this matter can be resolved.

Mr Hampton: Let me give you an example of what's at stake here. This is an ad that was in the New York Times. It's placed there by the Canadian Tourism Commission, of which your government is part, and it advertises the Caribana parade. It says, "This colourful Caribbean festival culminates in a huge parade through downtown Toronto." This is being advertised across the continent.

All we're asking is for you to show some leadership, to be a mediator, a conciliator. Bring the parties to the table and work out this logistical problem. Your government has no problem interfering with health care across the province, school boards across the province, forcing municipal amalgamation across the province. Here, with some productive intervention, you can do a good thing. That's all we're asking you to do. Show some leadership. Get involved, bring the parties to the table and let's get on with a very good parade.

Hon Ms Mushinski: As I already indicated in my first response, I believe the Premier is indeed showing leadership with respect to that component.

Having said that, let me also say this: Two years ago, I wrote to all our agencies and advised them this govern-

ment would no longer be playing a very significant funding role in funding festivals. We advised Caribana of that two years ago, but to assist them with the transition we did approve \$67,500 last year to assist them with long-term marketing initiatives. This was in keeping with the Metro chairman's task force on the future of Caribana, which I understand they're continuing to discuss at the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister knows I've been an advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities for very many years, including eight years as our party's spokesperson for disability issues when we were on the other side of the House.

I have long been disturbed by the unfairness of Ontario's social assistance rules which penalize disabled persons who receive assistance or gifts from their families. The amount of a family's assistance is deducted from the disabled person's benefit, even if it's for critical need, such as assistive devices, support services and housing. What steps are you taking to address this unfair situation?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Thank you to the honourable member for an excellent question. She highlights certainly one of the reasons why we have to remove people with disabilities from the welfare system. It's not a program that's designed to meet their needs. We've received many recommendations, excellent suggestions from the disabled community and that is what we are following in this instance. We will be allowing families who can and are able to assist in terms of any other expenses, for example, education expenses, so that the person will not be penalized if they make that gift, that financial donation to help them. That's one improvement.

Second, we are also allowing additional contributions for any other expenses, that they can make those up to a maximum to assist their adult child. For example, many parents like to assist an adult child with disabilities in terms of setting them up in an independent living arrangement. This will allow them to indeed do that.

Mrs Marland: Many parents of disabled adult children have met with me to discuss their fears about how their adult children will survive when the parents are no longer living. These parents want their children to be able to continue living in the community rather than face a future in institutional care. They would like to establish adequate trust funds to help provide for their children, but under the current rules for family benefits that is impossible. Minister, I would like to know if you have addressed this serious concern in your proposal for a new Ontario disability support program.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Like the member for Mississauga South, I have met with many elderly parents who have adult children who have disabilities and their concern about how to make provision for their children when they pass on has certainly registered in terms of that needs to

be changed and we need to make an improvement. So it is our intention that we will increase the amount of money that will be allowed in trusts up to \$100,000. It's currently at \$65,000. We're going to allow it to be at \$100,000 and also we will allow the interest on that trust to grow within that trust up to \$100,000. Before, the interest was calculated and deductions were made. In addition, any interest above that can also be used for expenses to improve the quality of life for the person with disabilities.

I think these are improvements that people representing the disabled community have been lobbying for and I understand they meet many of the needs they have identified.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. She just responded to the issue regarding the Ontario disability support program. Everything she announced that would be encouraging individuals with disabilities to get out, find and keep a job, are things that will cost the government money. Let's be clear. This ministry has been cut \$177 million. The announcement last week with great fanfare sets out items that, yes, will cost the government money and, yes, are required to get these people jobs and keep them.

Next week or this week, this minister will introduce legislation that will change the definition and the criteria for disabled. I would like to ask the minister: With your new criteria, will there be more people or fewer people who have disabilities able to receive support they need?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Of course the cost of this program is going to increase because the number of people with disabilities in the population is increasing. We quite anticipate that there will be more people, unfortunately, who will have to rely on income support, those individuals with disabilities. That's why we think it's important to make the program work for their needs so it is there for those individuals when and if they need it.

Mrs Pupatello: There are a number of groups out there that really would like the minister to answer the question. The change in the criteria means only two things: It will change. You've acknowledged it's changing. The change will mean it's more inclusive or less inclusive. You're changing it. That means something changes, clearly. What does that mean? I want to know, will there be fewer people who are able to receive all the good benefits you announced, or have you in fact raised the bar and you're finding the money for those programs in one way: You are going to take people out of the system because they no longer meet the criteria? Minister, when you announce your legislation some time this month, we will be looking forward to that. I have no further supplementary.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes, the definition is changing because people from the disabled community told us the definition needed to change. So yes, we have been very clear about that, it is going to change. It needs to recognize that whether or not someone has a disability, what is important is the impact of that disability on their life, the impact of that disability in terms of how they can function in the community, in the home, in the work-

place. Yes, the definition must remove labels like "permanently unemployable." That does not meet the needs of people with disabilities. Yes, the definition has to recognize that people with disabilities often have recurrent problems and, yes, that's what we are attempting to do in the new definition. We have listened. They've wanted us to make changes and that's why we're doing them.

I repeat, because obviously the honourable member didn't hear me the first time, of course there will be more people who need this program, as more people with disabilities unfortunately will be occurring in an aging population.

SAULT COLLEGE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. Perhaps the minister could explain to the House and to the people of Algoma district why it is that the programs of the Sault College campuses in Wawa, serving north Algoma, and in Elliot Lake, serving Elliot Lake and the North Shore in the eastern part of Algoma, are being discontinued and the outreach to those parts of Algoma and the communities of Algoma will no longer continue.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm sure the member opposite knows and understands that the programs that are offered by a college are provided and offered after a review by the governors of the college, by people in the community looking at the services that are needed by that community, the programs that are needed by the students in that local area. Those decisions are not made by the Ministry of Education and Training; they are made by the college.

Mr Wildman: The minister will know that the Sault College budget has been slashed by almost \$12 million since 1995 and that the governors are making decisions on the basis of not having enough money to carry out the programs. Besides the cut in access for students in north Algoma and east Algoma, the cuts at Elliot Lake have resulted in the loss of 21 jobs in that community, or a payroll of \$1.5 million, and in north Algoma a loss of 17 jobs, or \$892,000 in payroll. What effect does the minister think this is going to have on the economy — the private sector, the retail sector, the real estate values in Wawa and Elliot Lake — besides the lack of access for students?

Hon Mr Snobelen: First, I think the honourable member knows that the government asked colleges and universities to find savings that were in the Common Sense Revolution, part of the package that we put out a year before the last election, and that this year we have not asked colleges and universities to make further reductions. In fact with regard to the colleges, we have allowed them to participate for a longer period in the program of matching grants from the province and local community to help students most in need.

We have also been working with our colleges subsequent to the Smith committee report, and my colleague Tom Froese, the parliamentary assistant, who is responsible for this inside the ministry, has been working with the colleges now on how to make sure the programs they

offer are consistent with the needs of students in the future. So yes, we have asked the colleges and universities for savings, but now we are looking at the investments that we need to make as a province and a college system to meet the needs that students will have in the future.

That means a very different college system in some ways. That means colleges that are built around excellent programs designed to provide the training for the jobs of the future, and I believe we are well along the path to do just that. I am quite proud of our college program in Ontario.

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training as well. As you are aware, this government is focusing education resources into the classroom. Since technology is such an important aspect of everyone's lives these days, my constituents in the riding of Oshawa have expressed their concern to me about the importance of their children having access to technology in the classroom. Can you tell my constituents what the Ministry of Education is doing to ensure that their children have access to the technology needed to enhance their education?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for the question. In 1996-97, the government will spend about \$68 million in grants for technologies for our schools. This includes a doubling of the TIPP grants and a particular focus of those grants on the early years of education of our very youngest students.

Also, I initiated last December a series of round table discussions with people from the technologies, educators, parents and some students to talk about not just technology for technology's sake but the role of technology in the schools of the future. We believe we need to move our students to that classroom of the future as quickly as we can so they can acquire the skills, the knowledge, the habits and the disciplines that will be relevant for our students who will be graduating in the year 2010 and beyond.

We are focusing on what technologies will support teachers and support students in the literacy that they will need to have in the year 2010, on developing the curiosity they'll need to be successful in their lives and on the sense of self-reliance that they'll also need. We have, I believe, made a commitment to having the top student achievement in Canada. We know that to do that we need the best-resourced classrooms in Canada and we are making those moves right now.

1510

PETITIONS

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative of Assembly Ontario, and it concerns the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax.

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax does not recognize the uniqueness of the north; and

"Whereas Mike Harris should know that gas prices are higher in northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the new Mike Harris northern vehicle registration tax is blatantly unfair to the north; and

"Whereas we have no voice for the north fighting for northerners around the cabinet table;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to revoke the new tax imposed on the north by Mike Harris and convince the Tory government to understand that, indeed, northern Ontario residents do not want the new Mike Harris vehicle registration tax."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I am in full agreement with it.

COURT DECISION

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): For the record, the petition reads:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to do away with the topless law."

The petition I have from my riding of Simcoe East is a federal constitutional issue and a ruling on this question was reached in the Supreme Court, so that's a petition which is unconstitutional in this House.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature to it.

BIBLIOTHÈQUES PUBLIQUES

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai ici une pétition qui me provient des Amis de la bibliothèque publique de Bourget.

«Aux membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:
«Étant donné que nous croyons fermement que la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en Ontario est un droit fondamental de tous les Ontariens et toutes les Ontariennes ;

«Nous, les soussignés, demandons aux membres de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de sauvegarder la responsabilité provinciale dans les bibliothèques publiques en s'assurant de maintenir ce qui suit :

«(1)Les subventions provinciales qui permettent d'assurer à tous les Ontariens et à toutes les Ontariennes un accès équitable aux documents et aux services de bibliothèque publique ;

«(2)La coordination des programmes de partage des ressources tels que le système de prêt entre bibliothèques et l'accès au réseau Internet ;

«(3)Une politique permettant d'assurer l'existence du réseau des bibliothèques publiques de l'Ontario ;

«(4)L'aide directe de la part du gouvernement provincial au niveau du service, par exemple par l'entremise du Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario-Sud et du Service des bibliothèques de l'Ontario du Nord ;

«(5)Une loi maintenant l'autonomie des conseils d'administration des bibliothèques publiques.»

Et j'y ajoute ma signature. Merci.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no dialysis treatment currently available in the Cornwall area; and

"Whereas this lack of medical treatment forces dialysis patients throughout Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and beyond to drive to Ottawa or Kingston several times each week, even during dangerous weather conditions, to receive the basic medical attention, incurring unnecessary stress, cost and inconvenience; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health promised on April 24, 1996, to rectify this medical shortfall by establishing a dialysis treatment facility in Cornwall; and

"Whereas the promise made by the Minister of Health has, to date, not been kept, resulting in local patients and their families and friends continuing to drive to Ottawa and Kingston for treatment several times per week during the above-noted conditions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the health minister follows through on the commitment made in April of last year to set up the long-awaited and much-needed facilities in the Cornwall area for Cornwall residents."

I have also signed the petition.

BEAR HUNTING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas bears are hunted in the spring after they have come out of hibernation; and

"Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the spring are female, some with cubs; and

"Whereas 80% of the orphaned cubs do not survive the first year; and

"Whereas 95.3% of the cubs killed by non-resident hunters and 54% killed by resident hunters are killed over bait; and

"Whereas Ontario still allows the limited use of dogs in bear hunting; and

"Whereas bears are the only large mammals hunted in the spring; and

"Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted over bait; and

"Whereas there are only six states in the United States which still allow a spring hunt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to amend the Game and Fish Act to prohibit the hunting of bears in the spring and to prohibit the use of baiting and dogs in all bear hunting activities."

This is a petition that contains a great many names from my area of the province and is brought forward by the Animal Alliance of Canada.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition from the good people on Westmount Avenue against prescription user fees, very appropriate today.

"Whereas the government of Mike Harris has broken its pre-election promise not to impose user fees on health care;

"Whereas the user fees imposed by the Harris government on prescription drugs are causing low-income seniors grave hardship;

"Whereas the vast majority of seniors have worked very hard and have paid taxes for decades;

"Whereas seniors are most concerned that this will be the beginning of more and more user fees on health care;

"We, the undersigned, totally oppose the Mike Harris prescription user fees for seniors and petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Mike Harris government place a moratorium on all health care user fees for seniors."

I affix my name to this petition.

TUITION FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition here signed by several hundred people concerned about rising student tuition fees.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas post-secondary educational costs have been increasing due to economic and technological changes;

"Whereas student tuition fees have increased greatly over the past few years;

"Whereas the cost of living for students continues to increase;

"Whereas students are unable to continue their education due to high costs;

"Whereas future economic growth depends on access to post-secondary education;

"Whereas the panel on the Future Directions for Postsecondary Education recognizes the inadequacy in financial resources available to post-secondary education;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to renew its financial commitment for post-secondary education and to recognize that a multi-year commitment to the restoration of support must be guaranteed."

This comes from Claudio Monteleone in Thunder Bay, and I'm very proud to sign my name to this petition.

MANDATORY INQUESTS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition concerns worker safety.

"To the Honourable Solicitor General and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario has decided to scrap mandatory inquests as a result of fatalities in the mining and construction industry and

"Whereas this unprecedented and callous decision sends workplace safety back 20 years;

"We, the undersigned, request that Solicitor General Bob Runciman, on behalf of all workers in the mining and construction industry, reverse his decision to remove mandatory inquests from the Coroners Act of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in full agreement with it.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I'm pleased to present a petition from the people of Durham East today.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and

"Whereas abortion is not therapeutic; and

"Whereas abortion is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require elective procedures to be funded; and

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the province exclusively to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of over \$25 million;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government remove abortion as a service or procedure covered under the provincial health insurance plan."

I am pleased to present this petition.

1520

TV ONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The petition campaign to save TVO continues remarkably across the province. Thousands and thousands of petitions are coming in. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TV Ontario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continues to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I am very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): This petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness; and

"Whereas abortion is not therapeutic; and

"Whereas abortion is never medically necessary; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require elective procedures to be funded; and

"Whereas there is no right to publicly funded abortion; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility and the authority of the provinces exclusively to determine what services will be insured;

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas the availability of abortion at public expense leads to the use of abortion as a means of birth control; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of over \$25 million;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario provincial government remove abortion as a service or procedure covered under the provincial health insurance plan."

NORTHWESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition from the good people on Davenport Road. It's "Save Northwestern Hospital":

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the 1995 provincial election campaign, Mike Harris promised he would not close hospitals; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris hospital closing commission has ordered the closing of 10 hospitals in Metro Toronto alone; and

"Whereas closing community hospitals like Northwestern General Hospital and creating more costly mega-hospitals will greatly diminish the quality of health care while increasing costs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Mike Harris keep his campaign promise not to close hospitals and keep community hospitals open across Ontario as he promised."

I affix my name to this petition.

TVONTARIO

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as well on behalf of TVOntario.

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality, commercial-free television

that continues to focus 70% of its programming schedule on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVOntario is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVOntario continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

In support, I put my signature to it.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I'm in full agreement with it.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF ONTARIO ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA COMMISSION DES SERVICES FINANCIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to establish the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and to make complementary amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 140, Loi créant la Commission des services financiers de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I really don't have any brief remarks; I made them earlier today. I think this bill will indeed improve how financial services are delivered to Ontarians and protect the consumer at the same time.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Municipal Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): I'm pleased to introduce this bill today. The bill makes provisions for the Municipal Act providing for the restructuring of municipalities applicable to the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and its constituent municipalities. It has been requested by the local municipalities in order to help them with their restructuring efforts.

If I might, Mr Speaker, at this time I'd like to pay tribute to Mayor Brian Coburn of Cumberland, the chair of the mayors' committee in Ottawa-Carleton, and his predecessor, Mayor Merle Nicholds of Kanata, for their collective leadership in what has been accomplished in Ottawa-Carleton to date.

I'm pleased to advise also that the three mayors of the municipalities, Ottawa, Gloucester and Nepean, portions of which I represent in the Ottawa-Rideau riding, have all embraced the procedure that has commenced and demonstrated a commitment to their community as a whole, laying aside all partisan feelings. I personally thank Mayor Jacquelin Holzman of Ottawa, Mayor Claudette Cain of Gloucester, and Mayor Ben Franklin of Nepean, in behalf of the citizens of Ottawa-Carleton.

I also, if I might, wish to acknowledge the work of Councillor Brian McGarry of the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, who has been a driving force behind the movement which brought our municipal leaders together. His leadership and his perseverance have kept the forces of division in check and —

The Acting Speaker: The member for Ottawa-Rideau, I beg your indulgence. It was merely a point to give a brief explanation of your bill and not an elaborate, elongated response.

Mr Guzzo: I appreciate that, but I'd be remiss if not mentioning Councillor McGarry's contribution. I apologize for overspeaking. The municipality has been very well served by the municipal leaders.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sure; thank you.

1530

OPPOSITION DAY

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I move opposition day motion number 7:

Whereas Mike Harris promised Ontarians in the last election that there would be "no new user fees for health care"; and

Whereas the government broke this promise on July 15, 1996, by imposing \$225 million per year in user fees on prescription drugs for seniors, people with disabilities and the poor; and

Whereas Mike Harris forced seniors earning over \$16,075 to pay a \$100 "annual" user fee and all subsequent dispensing fees while charging poorer seniors a \$2 user fee for every prescription filled; and

Whereas Mike Harris added insult to injury when he forced seniors to pay another "annual" \$100 fee on April 1, 1997, only eight and a half months after the last so-called "annual" fee; and

Whereas this double-charging amounts to a \$30-million ripoff; and

Whereas these new user fees are causing undue hardship for Ontario seniors, many of whom must now choose between paying the rent, buying food or filling necessary prescriptions; and

Whereas we have a special responsibility to ensure seniors are treated with dignity and respect;

Therefore, this House calls on Mike Harris to admit that he broke a key election promise, to review the impact these new user fees have had on seniors' lives, to keep his election promise by scrapping these user fees and, at the very least, to correct his blatant ripoff by giving seniors a three-and-a-half-month credit on this unfair user fee.

I am delighted to lead the debate on my motion. I'm also pleased that there's some time to say today that the minister through his announcement, admitting of course the government's mistake in charging seniors for 12 months while allowing for an eight-and-a-half-month benefit period, has announced in the House that the government would extend the program to cover the full 12 months, crediting an extra four months.

With all respect, the seniors have already paid, as of April 1, another \$100 which should have been July 15 of this year and not April 1. Indeed the government is not crediting anything to those seniors who have already paid.

Regardless, it's shameful that seniors had to come to Queen's Park begging to get what was rightfully theirs, what they had paid for. If it weren't for seniors, seniors' groups and for us, the opposition, if it weren't for the fact that day after day since April 1 we've been after the minister and the government, saying, "This is wrong; you cannot penalize seniors, you cannot take away what's just, what's fair," this wouldn't have happened today. I'm delighted that seniors have won this battle, that the government has retreated and has recognized it as such.

Since the government initiated the program last year, it has taken in some \$225 million, and the three and a half months the government has recognized and has credited today was to bring in another \$30 million.

Why do the seniors feel so strongly about the program and the \$100? For a couple of reasons. It is not fair that the government keeps on picking on the most needy in our society, especially seniors. They felt that the government was cheating on the promise made to them prior to

the election, when the Premier and of course those campaigning, now ministers, said "No new user fees."

When seniors saw they were paying \$100, let alone the \$2 plus prescription fees, and then three and a half months early they had to pay another \$100, they were angry and felt cheated by their own government. I am pleased that they have shown the government they are picking on a particular interest group, if you will, that will not stand by, will not sit idle and be trampled upon by a very uncaring government.

Since July last year, the seniors have been paying and contributing to the system. But that's not what the government has been saying, especially in the last few days when we've been asking questions of the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health, the minister responsible for seniors' issues and the Premier himself. They said: "That's okay. The seniors have accepted our plan. We have met. We have consulted widely with seniors' groups and we have listened." This is ironic, because if indeed the government had met with and listened to those groups, they would never or should never have introduced such a plan, which would penalize seniors who can't afford an unnecessary and undue user fee or copayment.

When we have a Premier who keeps on saying, "That's okay, because we have met and have discussed this very widely with seniors' groups and they agree; they are very generous and they don't mind paying this \$100 to help others," I wonder if the government has really met with some of these people, if the government has really listened to some of these people. Let me tell you, I represent perhaps one of the lowest-income and poorest working areas in Metro, if not in Ontario, and I have an extremely large senior population. I don't think you would find one of those seniors living so comfortably that they would be so generously willing to do away with money they need for their own prescriptions and give it to somebody else.

Do you know who that somebody else would be? I have wonderful people in my riding who are as generous as the rest of Ontarians, but it's not to help some others in need. It is to give that \$30 million to those people who don't need it, because the government has created a monster, and it's called a 30% rebate. Seniors are angered because they should not be picked on to compensate for the promise the Premier made prior to the election, so he can accomplish the 30% rebate. The seniors are rebelling at that.

1540

The minister continues saying, "They are generous people, and they want to help others." Let me tell you, we have seniors — individuals and groups — saying: "I have to buy a number of prescriptions and pay. I've got to go and ask my pharmacist which one is most important, because I can't afford to buy all three or four or five of them. I have to ask the pharmacist which is the most important, because that's all I can afford." For the benefit of the minister, I have one here just received fresh this afternoon; one prescription alone is \$92.40, plus \$7.56 for the patient's other charges. This already tops the \$100, one prescription.

We have the minister saying, "Don't worry about it." They say, "Some of the people are willingly agreeing to

pay \$100 so we can give it to somebody else." But this doesn't go to some other needy people. If there are needy people, it's the responsibility of this government to look after those needy people and not to pick on them. But unfortunately the government is not doing what it's preaching, because if this was the case, seniors wouldn't come down to Queen's Park saying, "Mr Minister, we want to meet with you." This is in their press release of June 4. If the seniors are down here, it is because the government didn't genuinely sit with these groups and listen to them widely, as the minister has been quoted as saying.

But no, seniors had to come downtown and shame the government into correcting the injustice, the wrong that has been placed on the most needy in our society. The seniors came downtown, saying to the minister and the Premier, "Meet with us, because we have a problem with the plan." It's not only the \$100, the yearly deductible; the seniors have a problem with the entire concept, with the entire plan, because as I have shown you, one prescription alone, \$92, with all the other charges brings the whole thing already above the \$100.

Today the government has realized that you just can't fool a very sensitive, particular group in our society: our seniors. The government has learned a tremendous lesson today; I hope they have. It's not only that the announcement that was made today will solve the problem; it will not. It will not solve the problem one bit. The problems associated with the Ontario drug benefit program go very far; they reach many, not only the seniors who have paid \$100. It's very encompassing in many other areas with respect to health care for seniors and others.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I hate to interrupt my colleague, but there is no quorum in the House. Could you check for that, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): I would ask to check if there is a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sergio.

Mr Sergio: Just to continue and take advantage of the extra few minutes left, the program so far has brought into the government coffers some \$225 million, but it's not consenting seniors who have been saying, "Yes, we are willing to pay, voluntarily and generously."

It is important that the government learn the lesson of today and make whatever adjustments are necessary to the program itself. It is not the program, that is, the \$2 or the \$6; it is the problems associated with the entire system. For the benefit of the minister — I'm pleased he's here today — it is the wide range of problems associated with the system.

With the copayments and user fee payments, we are forcing many seniors to go without proper medication, and this has many other consequences. We are forcing many seniors to go without any proper medication whatsoever.

This user fee on drugs also penalizes others. It is not the \$2 fee alone. It also prevents many non-seniors from

obtaining the necessary drugs as prescribed by their doctors. We have many cases where customers go to a pharmacy and say: "I can only afford one drug. Which one is the most essential one for me?"

This will be an expense on the health care system as well, because what's going to happen now? The side-effects of not taking the proper and necessary drugs will cause other problems for many seniors.

Many other seniors are affected by user fees: people in long-term care, nursing homes and so forth. Those people are being forced to pay a copayment, again because of the government's desire —

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): Elinor Caplin brought in the biggest copayments in the province's history.

Mr Sergio: I can appreciate what the minister is saying. I can see that he's agreeing. He's recognizing that the government has made a mistake. I hope he has listened to the people who came here to Queen's Park. I hope he listens to what the opposition is saying. The way he has made adjustments today, I hope he will consider sitting down with those groups that are saying: "We have a concern about the system. We have a problem making the copayment and we want to sit with you." If the minister had really sat down with those groups and listened to them, he would have gone to his caucus, he would have gone to the Premier and said: "Premier, we have a problem with seniors. What we have done is totally unfair and we have to reconsider."

This is the message I'm leaving with the Premier and the minister today, to go back, meet with the seniors and make those necessary changes so the system will be fairer and acceptable, because indeed our seniors deserve nothing less.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: I'm pleased to support the resolution we're dealing with here today. I want to comment generally about the government and what they're doing to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

I would remind you that we dealt just a couple of days ago, last week in fact, with injured workers. You remember what this government is doing to injured workers. You remember that this government talks about an unfunded liability, and as a result of that unfunded liability they give money back to the employers by whacking injured workers, by taking away from the injured workers so they can deal with their unfunded liability, while at the same time giving the employer a hell of a big \$6-billion break.

I try to think about the ethos of this government, trying to understand their value system. As I look at everything they're doing, I understand the values of this party. As I look at what they do to injured workers, I say obviously the values we have here in the social democratic party are not shared by the group across from me, because we would never dream of making the kinds of cuts, the kinds of assaults against injured workers that this government is about to do and is doing, to workers in general and to injured workers in particular.

Hon Mr Jackson: They're getting a raise.

Mr Marchese: The ethos of this government clearly is not on the side of the little guy. It's not on the side of those who are very vulnerable and most vulnerable.

I think I heard Minister Jackson say they're getting a raise. Injured workers are getting a raise, Cam?

Hon Mr Jackson: Yes.

1550

Mr Marchese: I don't understand. You whack injured workers, because instead of 90% of net pay they get 85% of net pay. He calls that an increase. Do you understand that? I raise this issue because it's important for those viewing this to understand the mathematics of this government. They're about to get 85% of net instead of 90%. Cam Jackson, the minister, says that's a raise.

I don't get it, but when he has an opportunity to speak about this, he will be able to tell us how he finds that people out there, injured workers in particular, are going to benefit from what this government is doing to you — not for you, because this government doesn't do anything for you; it does it to you. That's why you need to be able to place yourself vis-à-vis this government, because many people are, as I see it, victims of this government.

We move from injured workers, because we already dealt with this issue last week in the debates, into this piece of the resolution, so as to get a good sense of how these fine, honourable people on the other side consult as they bring about new policy changes.

Minister Jackson, in the one-page statement he presented today, says on several occasions how proud he is and how they will continue to consult seniors. He makes it appear that when they imposed a \$100 annual fee on those earning \$16,000 and up, somehow they consulted with seniors, or that when they imposed a \$2 user fee for anyone earning \$16,000 and less, somehow they were consulted by M. Jackson or these other honorables across the way from me.

There is no consultation going on. There is never any consultation that I can see, because we would know. The government speaks the line about consulting, but they don't consult. If they did, the seniors would have been able to tell them: "Leave the present system in place. We don't want to be whacked by you fine Tories again. Why would you whack us, seniors who have gone through our lives working hard at many different jobs" — in fact, many women carry two jobs, in the workplace and at home — "and when we get to an age where our earning power is less than it used to be, all of a sudden you say we've got to pay a \$2 prescription fee every time we go to the doctor and the doctor signs one of those prescriptions." You go to the pharmacist and he is very happy to fill it for you because he gets a dispensing fee, so he's okay, he's happy, but the senior is not happy.

If you had consulted them, they would have told you they are not happy. Many of them, I suspect, are telling you now. Those who have the time, the energy and the emotional strength to come and look you in the eye will tell you that this is something they don't accept and that this is a burden to them. And it is a burden. You can dismiss it all you want. You can say whatever it is you say to seniors, but it's a user fee, and a hefty one at that. This is contrary to the promise of M. Harris and the lot of you who went around prior to the election saying there would not be any user fees.

It's a funny thing, because you have the Minister of Health and M. Jackson and others saying this is not a

user fee. Euphemistically, this is what they call a copayment, as if somehow to relieve people of that thing that is a burden to them. That's the user fee, the cost that is applied to the prescription whenever you go to the doctor. It's a user fee.

M. Wilson says, "No, under the Canada Health Act they say this is not a user fee." The Minister of Health can say all he wants, but every senior who goes to a pharmacy knows if they make \$16,000 and over and they pay that \$100, that's a charge; they've got to pay for that. Don't they say that, Len, in your part of the world? Isn't that a cost to the people you represent? Of course it's a cost to them. Isn't it a cost to the seniors in the ridings of those Tory individuals across from me? I would think it's a cost to them.

Whether they're seniors who are Tories or seniors who are Liberals or seniors who are NDPers or seniors who don't even vote, it's a cost to them. We can't escape it. No matter how M. Wilson tries to embellish or camouflage, calling it a copayment or saying that under the Canada Health Act it's not a charge or a user fee, it doesn't hide the fact that it's a cost.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): It's a tax.

Mr Marchese: It's a tax on those who have the least. That is why it's so pitiful what this government is doing. Being in politics often has to do with taking sides. This government is very unabashed about its support for certain sectors of society. Under the guise of job creation, under the guise of a tax cut they are assaulting a whole lot of people in society. They're taking sides all the time. No one should think that somehow this Conservative government is a friend of everybody in Ontario.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): Point of order, Mr Speaker: This is the Liberal opposition day in the Legislature. There's one Liberal in his seat in the House and I would have thought on their day they would be here. I would like to know if there's a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would the table check if there's a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: The member across, my good friend for Nepean, wants me to remind the Tories across that what they do insults their constituents. He wants me to tell them and him that this insults seniors, in particular people with disabilities and the poor, and I agree with him. I want to thank the member for Nepean for reminding me about that because from time to time I forget to tell the public how some things are insulting.

1600

To continue with the thread prior to the quorum call, this government is taking sides and loves to take sides. If you look at the issue of rent control, you will know that this government said, "We've taken sides and we've taken the side of landlords," and I proudly responded that we were taking the side of those who rent. There are 3.3 million people in this province who rent and, in my view, it is our duty, particularly as New Democrats, to defend the rights of the majority who are the least able to afford it versus what these Tory people do, and that is to defend

the minority interests, the minority of people who have a great deal of wealth and don't need their help, don't need my help certainly.

The landlords who have done well over the years and continue to do well are getting a hand from these Tories so they can continue to transfer money from those who can least afford it to the landlords, because those poor individuals are not making enough. They're taking sides. They're taking sides when they side with the employer by giving them a cut, and they take sides when they attack injured workers, as they do that. They're taking sides with the most powerful people in this province.

When they say they care, I always tell them, "Prove that you care through your actions, not through your words; not because you say you care and that means you do." Caring is something that you need to show evidence for, and you show evidence of that through your policies and the bills you present in this House. When you attack injured workers, I argue you don't care about them. When you attack the people who rent in this province, 3.3 million of them, at their expense to the benefit of the landlord, I argue you don't care about those 3.3 million. You care about the few who make the money because they are your friends.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think my friend from Fort York would probably like to obey the standing orders and speak to the motion that is on the floor.

Mr Len Wood: That's not a point of order.

Mrs Marland: Yes, it is a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): Thank you for the advice from the member for Mississauga South. The member for Fort York, will you take that under advisement.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the comment, of course, but she knows quite clearly that when we make comments in this House we need to establish links to what these people do. You need the general picture. You need the big picture, not the little picture. When M^{me} Marland speaks about somehow diverting from the issue, all of the issues interconnect, and the issue I was raising with you, Speaker, and with M^{me} Marland, is that they're taking sides. They're taking sides by supporting wealthy individuals in this province at the expense of those who are vulnerable: tenants here, injured workers there, and in this case, seniors and people with disabilities.

This fee that they have imposed on each and every one of those poor seniors is a big slap in their face for those who don't have the means any more to be able to carry on as they would like. They're saying even seniors have to pay their way. That's what they're saying through this.

We argue that is profoundly unfair. We have a growing population that is becoming more and more senior in the next 10, 15, 20 years. That means more of them will be paying for the problems we have in society as opposed to going to the types of people they serve, who serve them, to say, "You've got to pay your own way," because that's the just way in this society. That's the way it ought to be.

We reject the Reform position and the Conservative position of these people. We reject it because there is no caring in that particular philosophy and ideology. That is

not the ethos that people in Ontario would want to be governed by because those are not values of community, of caring and of supporting those who can least afford it. That's not the ethos of this province. It has not been for a long time.

These people across the way are changing this ethos and it's up to you, you who are watching, because these are the only people we appeal to. We implore you to listen to what these people are saying and to what these people across the way from me are doing, and get a sense of whether or not you believe that what they're doing is something you can support. I tell you, that tax cut they're offering to those wealthiest individuals, the most privileged —

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Jordan likes the way I'm speaking and I'm glad because I never get to hear much in this House, so I like to hear from Mr Jordan from time to time and I know he likes what I'm saying.

The tax cut that M. Jordan and his host of friends there are giving supports his privileged friends. It's not supporting seniors and that's the insanity of these policies. They do not support seniors when they do the things they do. These policies are not for them.

I urge you who are watching, seniors in particular, you've got to go and meet your Tory MPPs and look them square in the eye, Mr Jordan included, look him square in the eye and say: "Mr Jordan, you defend for me your \$100 fee and the \$2 prescription fee every time I have to go and get a prescription. Defend it. Tell me in my eyes." M. Jordan, I'd love to hear you speak on this issue. Ask them to defend it eye to eye in front of you. Sometimes letters are insufficient. You've got to go to their office and you've got to attack them for what they're doing to you and to our province and to the ethos of this province.

I thank you for your attention.

Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought maybe the member for Fort York would like to know that the word "ethos" refers to the fundamental, spiritual characteristic of a culture —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Mississauga South, we appreciate your comments, but that's not a point of order.

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I'm pleased to enter the debate —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Could we have some order, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon; member for Nepean.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It's a little raucous in the House because it is a very important issue.

In observing the debate so far and speaking on the government side, it is an interesting lesson in politics, whether this is truly a concern, a requirement for action in terms of extending the ODB to cover the full 16 months at a \$100 deductible and to prorate seniors who enter into the system during a fiscal year, and those are concerns that we've addressed, or whether this is a debate about the ODB itself, whether there should be a copayment on the ODB.

Certainly you can see the difference in the approaches, whether the word "ethos" is proper or not, when you talk about the principles that bind us as Ontarians, and especially in this address today the principle that reflects those of the seniors, the hard-work generation, those who helped build this country and provide for people like me to enjoy this land of freedom and this land of prosperity to celebrate democracy in a chamber like this, and how they react to the debate they may be watching this afternoon.

If you talk about ethos or you talk about principles, the NDP, the third party, acts as if they would not institute the copayment, would continue to run up the debt, in fact \$100 billion of debt after their government's consecutive \$10-billion deficits. That does not at all meet the ethos or the principles of the seniors we're speaking to today. That generation fundamentally rejects the idea of running up debts and passing on debts to their children and their grandchildren, an amazing feature, that they care when I go door to door and go to public meetings, that they care so much about the deficit and debt because they care about what happens to their children and their grandchildren and their children's grandchildren.

The Liberal government, in their discussions today, act like they have a blank cheque for health care. They wouldn't make any tough decisions whatsoever. They wouldn't institute a type of copay, promising everything, but when you look at the promises they made during the election — I remember the debates in Port Colborne and Fort Erie and on the radio throughout Niagara South, promising only a \$17-billion health care budget. We've increased program spending to \$17.8 billion and in fact, with additional funds for capital and restructuring expenses, up to \$18.5 billion — a very generous allotment of funds to health care, compared especially to the Liberals' promise. I find it passing strange and I think it was all politics when they were preaching they would make all these generous decisions, or no decisions whatsoever, when they promised only a \$17-billion budget.

1610

As I said, I think the seniors understand that tough decisions have to be made in terms of funding a program that grows substantially, to bring new drugs on to the system. How do you do that when the drug costs go up every year? How do you finance that program without taking money out of the rest of the health care system? I think seniors understand that. They understand that tough decisions have to be made and they also have an understanding of fairness.

Through the activity of some of the members on this side of the House in speaking to me in my role as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, and the minister for seniors, Cam Jackson, most recently in my riding this weekend we were listening at first hand to seniors and hearing their concerns.

You've seen a strong response today to those concerns that Cam and I heard last weekend, that I've brought to the Minister of Health and that other backbenchers on this side have spoken about, when you've seen the government react to the seniors' questions and express that fairness and say: "Yes, we will extend the ODB for

the 16-month period. We will run it until the end of July. In fact, for those seniors who come on the program later on during the year, we will prorate it." I'll give you an example: If one senior were to come on the program two months before the year begins, their deductible would be \$16.66 rather than \$100. For a senior on the program for only 11 months it would be \$91.66.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York. Can I ask the members please, if they have conversations, to carry them to the chambers outside or to take your seats.

Mr Hudak: I have some names of seniors who have called me on this issue and I'm pleased to say that we have responded to their concerns: Gary Bysterbosch from Ridgeway in my riding, Peggy Fraser in Fort Erie and Bob Potts from Ridgeway, who spoke with the minister this weekend. Bob was in attendance for our seniors seminar in Fort Erie. I'm pleased that we've reacted to their concerns.

The other issue, which is the essential argument of the other side — I think they've recognized the government has moved and reacted to seniors in terms of extending the year for the ODB program and prorating the copayment and the deductible — is the issue, should you use a copay? I think seniors from that hardworking generation, those who had to save to make payments and who spent only according to what they had instead of running up debts and deficits year after year, like governments have done for far too long, know what that \$2 copay or \$100 deductible has done for them.

Seniors like Bob Potts and Gary and Peggy know that the fairness of the plan has meant that for example we've added 465 new drugs to the ODB formulary. Not just added those drugs, but very quickly put them on to the formulary, instead of lining them up at the door, like what happened under the Liberal government, under Elinor Caplan, who's no longer in this chamber, but her legacy lives on.

They had drugs lined up at the door for months on end. Seniors had need for some of the drugs that we've added, like Zyprexa, which was introduced in record time, which helps out patients with schizophrenia, or Coreg, which helps people with heart failure, drugs that have been added on under this government from funds from the copay but that would have been lined up at the door for months or even years under previous governments that would fail to act to bring those drugs on.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Niagara South makes comments on the former government, but the students of St Anne school in Iroquois Falls remember well what the government had to say about user fees and that was that under the blue book, under the Common Sense Revolution there would be no user fees in Mike Harris's Ontario. That's what we're debating —

The Acting Speaker: Nice try, but it's not a point of order.

Mr Hudak: I know why the member wants to obfuscate, why he wants to hide it, because he's probably embarrassed by the record of the previous government, which delisted, took off the formulary 260 drugs; 260 drugs that had to be paid for by reaching into the purse

or into the wallet and paying the full cost themselves. They could not make the tough decision. While they were putting us \$100 billion in debt, they took 260 drugs that seniors were receiving and said to a Peggy Fraser or Bob Potts: "Too bad. You pay the whole shot yourself." We on this side disagree fundamentally with this approach.

Yes, there is a copayment to help sustain the program, a copayment to add 465 drugs to the program and, importantly, which seniors understand and feel good about, help people get on the Trillium program, low-income individuals or families with catastrophic drug costs. An example is a young man working at a gas station, a tough job, not making a lot of money, with a wife or a child with multiple sclerosis; couldn't pay the drug bills. In fact, under previous governments every incentive told him to quit his job and go on welfare and have welfare pay for it. Those incentives were mixed up.

We've increased the Trillium program. The copay has helped to pay for that, so that this man or this woman, supporting their family in a very difficult circumstance with very high drug bills, can continue to work. The generosity of the seniors across this province, the generosity of the hardworking generation that looks into the future as well as to the past has helped individuals like this person.

I fundamentally reject the petition before us today, this resolution, and stand with the government in saying that we are making improvements to the ODB plan for seniors and low-income individuals across Ontario.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Today is a great day to be an opposition member at Queen's Park, in particular one of the Liberal Party. I want to personally congratulate the member for Yorkview, Mario Sergio, who worked for months on this very specific issue.

People who come from Windsor-Sandwich, all of you who wrote to my office, all of you who asked me the one simple question they wanted us to ask the Minister of Health, "How many months in a year?" today we got our answer. In fact, you've restored 12 months in the calendar year for the seniors in Ontario.

All I can say to all of those people, and in particular Mr Manzone, who lives on Lesperance Road, and I know I've mentioned him several times in the House, is that we were canvassing —

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): The camera is over here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham East, member for Nepean, please.

Mrs Pupatello: I'd encourage you to just toss him right out, Speaker.

Mr Manzone on Lesperance Road, I know I've mentioned him several times in the House, put it to me very bluntly as we were canvassing for Gary McNamara in anticipation of the by-election in Windsor-Riverside. Gary McNamara said, "Keep mentioning Mr Manzone on Lesperance Road. He asked me one simple question: 'How many months in the year?'"

Every time we've asked that question in this House, the minister has waffled all over the place in answer. Some excuse, some other story; every day it was a

different story. The reality is that today they've had to renege on everything they've said over the last several months and in fact announce that there are 12 months in the year. If you are going to force a user fee on these seniors, to pay \$100 for a calendar year of annual drug fees, at minimum you are going to make it a full 12 months. We saw that as a complete ripoff to the seniors of Ontario, and in fact so did the seniors. We're very pleased. Mario Sergio did some tremendous work, and we're very thrilled to have been of support to him.

We had a postcard we were submitting to all of our seniors in Ontario. It had an interesting picture on it of Mike Harris with his hand in the purse of the senior, taking out money, and it says, "How dare you, Mike Harris?" We ask that all the time. We said, "How dare you, Mike Harris, take money from seniors so blatantly and so obviously?" We said, "Seniors didn't expect Mike Harris to rip them off, but that's exactly what he's doing." We were pleased to allow that we were the most effective opposition to call you to the carpet for that kind of behaviour that we find unacceptable.

There are a number of areas the government is working on in terms of policy that have a very negative impact on seniors, ministries we would hardly expect making significant cuts that affect seniors in Ontario. The Ministry of Agriculture can be blamed for this as well. A very obscure little cut: You wonder how the Ministry of Agriculture could possibly — they cut a \$50,000 grant to the master gardener program. Here was \$50,000, indeed taxpayers' money, going to support the horticultural community, the master gardener program, many of whom are seniors.

This is the kind of program that encourages volunteer activity, encourages seniors to stay active in their communities, encourages them to get outdoors and stay healthy and support a healthy lifestyle. A mere \$50,000 Ontario-wide paid for one support person and a 1-800 line that allowed people to call in for information, gave local volunteer groups a \$500 bursary on an annual basis that allowed them to send out newsletters and give good resource information to all the master gardeners and volunteer gardeners who do this sort of thing in their spare time.

We received lots of information from seniors saying, "We can't believe it was such a measly \$50,000 in the face of the billions." Yet that \$50,000 went so far in encouraging seniors to stay active in their communities. We can't imagine that in one breath Mike Harris says he wants to encourage volunteers to stay active, yet in another breath, through the Ministry of Agriculture, has this kind of negative impact on seniors. We're not pleased with that kind of behaviour, and frankly the Minister of Agriculture sent me a very poor letter in response to my enquiry.

1620

We've talked about user fees, and the seniors' user fee really was just one example of the broken promises that are now legendary in the Mike Harris government. We've written to all the ministers asking for information about all the new fee increases, all the new user fees. Here are the answers I've got so far.

This is from the Solicitor General's ministry: "A final answer can't be made available in the normal time

period." I would suspect that's because there are so many of them that they're taking a long time to count them. They did say, "A final answer will, however, be made on or about June 26." I asked the chair of our caucus, "What is the last day the House is in session in June?" It happens to be June 26. How very convenient that you'd make this information available to me as an opposition member on or about June 26.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, when we asked how many new user fees this ministry has implemented, again replies, "A final answer will be made on or about June 26." How very convenient for the minister.

The Chair of the Management Board: "A final answer on or about June 26." How very convenient.

The Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, again a ministry that is supposed to be dealing with the needs of seniors: "A final answer, however, will be available on or about June 26." How very convenient.

To the Ministry of the Attorney General: We found out yesterday about a new user fee for single moms who are trying to access custody support payments. Even though they don't have their income, they too are being asked to pay a \$50 fee to access the system, the same moms who are desperately looking for assistance. What does he tell me about the new user fees in his ministry? "A final answer will be available on or about June 26." That is shameful.

Here we have the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: "On or about June 26." Absolutely no shame.

You are waiting for the House to recess so we don't have active answers from the ministers in time to bring them up in the House. Let me tell you, whether we're sitting here in the House or out there in our own ridings, most of the people of Ontario will be very aware of the significant number of user fees this government has brought to bear on the taxpayers, yes, the one set of taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

Mr Bisson: I get the opportunity today, as do other members of the NDP caucus, to speak on this. This motion is quite clear. This is an opposition motion calling on the government to back off the direction they've taken when it comes to user fees specific to health care.

Speaker, you weren't here at the time, but I was a member of the last Parliament and I remember well the words of the then leader of the third party Mr Michael Harris when he stood in this House and railed no end when it came to health care. He was going to be the defender of health care. He stood himself up and said, "I and my caucus are going to do absolutely everything to protect health care," and in fact they made solemn promises in their Common Sense Revolution.

I remember back then talking to people in my constituency from Matheson to Iroquois Falls to Timmins, saying, "Can you believe that? Tories trying to make believe for some reason that they are now the defenders of health care?" I couldn't believe it. In fact they put in the Common Sense Revolution what? They made a solemn promise. The Common Sense Revolution, for people to remember, is what? It's the bible of the Conservative Party. That is the document by which this party ran and got elected in Ontario in the election of 1995.

What does it say? It says on page 6 of the Common Sense Revolution when it comes to health care, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." What has this government done? They've done a flip-flop. They said one thing during the election, and when they got elected they did quite the opposite. One of the first things they did in the health care system was to introduce user fees when it comes to prescription drugs for seniors and people needing medication for all kinds of ailments here in Ontario, something that didn't exist until this government came.

Then they stand in this House and they say: "They are not user fees. We call them copayments." I'm sorry, I want to use the words of Michael Harris, then third-party leader, in 1994 in a debate in this very assembly, when Mike Harris said, "A user fee is a user fee is a user fee is a user fee." Don't try to hide it for what it isn't. What you've done is you've broken your promise. You ran saying you would not introduce user fees in this province. You got elected. You came to power. You broke your promise. You're taxing the people of Ontario and you're putting in place user fees for the people of Ontario.

Further to health care, there were other comments made inside the Common Sense Revolution, and I think they're fairly topical. One of the things they said within the health care area was that the health care system was too important for us and that we needed to make sure we didn't cut any funding in our health care system.

Across northern Ontario people are trying to get access to health care services in communities like Sudbury and communities like Timmins, Iroquois Falls or wherever it might be, and they're finding that more and more, as time goes by, this government is making it difficult for people to access not only emergency care services but, more important, surgery services in the province.

I in the last week alone have dealt with two constituents, one from Monteith — for people who don't know where Monteith is, it's between the communities of Iroquois Falls and Matheson — who needs to get orthopaedic surgery. The surgery is a specialized type of surgery that cannot be done at the Timmins and District Hospital and he has just got word about when he can expect to get his surgery down here in Toronto at the Wellesley Hospital. Do you know when he has been told? June of 1999 is when he's going to get his surgery.

What's the reason, I find out, when I start checking out the situation for the gentleman from Monteith? It's that the cutbacks we have had in the health care system have made it that the surgeries are stacking up, and they're stacking up to the point that people can't even get in. What does this gentleman do? He is getting to the point where he's not able to move around and lead any kind of a life that is useful as far as being able to enjoy himself and enjoy his life in retirement. He's looking at the possibility of being in a wheelchair. Why? Because this government has cut the funding of health care to the point that people are having to wait upwards of two years to get surgery that is necessary for a person's lifestyle.

I have another case in my constituency office that we did manage to resolve about two weeks ago. A young gentleman, aged 30, in the community of Timmins had been waiting for valve replacement surgery at the Sudbury hospital. For how long? He had been waiting eight

months, and he was at the point where quite frankly his wife was fearing for his life. The only way we got him into the Sudbury hospital was a lot of work on the part of myself, the local doctors in the city of Timmins and the Timmins and District Hospital putting the pressure on the Sudbury hospital to get him in there and get him a bed for that surgery, something that never happened under the previous governments of either Bob Rae or David Peterson, and yes, even Mr Davis himself.

Why? Because this government has broken the most holy of holy promises they have made to the people of this province, and that is that they would not cut our health care system. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot run in an election and say, "I will not cut health care and I will not charge user fees," and then have the hypocrisy to come into this House and try to pretend that you have done nothing to harm our health care system. Quite frankly, you're putting our system of health care into risk. Why? Because you want it to fail, you want it to break down so you can then introduce private health care in this province. That's where you people are going and it's as simple as that. If you can get people waiting long enough on waiting lists, if you can get people used to paying user fees, it will be easier down the road for this government to turn around and say, "You can get better services if you agree to go to a private clinic somewhere and pay out of your own pocket." This is where the Mike Harris Reform-Conservative government is bringing the people of this province, and to that I say shame. The people not only of Cochrane South but from across this province will remember that in the next election.

In the final seconds I have, within order, I would like to point out to members of the assembly that we have with us today students from St Anne's school in Iroquois Falls, who are here visiting our fine assembly and visiting the city of Toronto as a way to look at what our great province has to offer everybody else. I would like the members to applaud to welcome the students of St Anne to this assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for the introduction.
1630

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): It's a pleasure to enter this debate. It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion today because it examines records, records on issues and on promises governments have made to the electorate. Let's not mince words here. This government of Mike Harris is committed to improving the quality of life enjoyed by seniors, so much so that in the smallest cabinet in Ontario since the Second World War, the Premier has appointed the only full-time minister dedicated solely to seniors in the entire country of Canada.

Those on the opposite benches may scoff and call this move merely window dressing, but seniors in my riding know the score and they told me so this morning in Acton. Seniors in Halton North know the difference between real change and window dressing. After more than 10 years of studies and inaction, the members opposite have a lot of nerve.

How many long-term-care beds did they create when they were in government? Where were the negotiated discounts on auto insurance rates for seniors? How many preventive vaccination programs for seniors did they

initiate when they were government? What happened to the out-of-country medical coverage for seniors when they were in government? How many prescription drugs did they list to expand the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary? What kind of long-term commitments did your governments make to home care?

All very good questions, ones that opposition members are red-faced when answering, because the fact is that their record on seniors is shameful. They created no long-term-care beds over the 10 years collectively that the opposition parties were in government. They eliminated out-of-country medical coverage for seniors. To address the fiscal pressures on the Ontario drug benefit program, they irresponsibly delisted hundreds of drugs available to seniors, 260 drugs in all.

Let's compare our records and approaches to seniors in Ontario. In order to deal with the fiscal pressures which would result from a \$2-billion reduction in federal social and health care dollars through transfer payments, we chose to introduce a \$2 copayment, not delist drugs. This responsible action allowed us to take a minimalist approach to increasing costs in the system and improve and expand the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary by adding 465 new products, helping more seniors than ever. Compare: 260 delisted, for which seniors then have to pay, compared to the 465 we added to the list. In fact, last year the government incurred an overall increase in expenses of \$114 million for drug benefits.

In addition to this measure, we have taken the following steps to improve the lives of all seniors living in Ontario: We have increased the home care budget by \$170 million, enabling an extra 80,000 people to live independently; we are providing free pneumonia-preventing vaccines for 1.4 million seniors at a cost of \$20 million; we are delivering one-window access to long-term care through community care access centres; we announced \$135 million in the last budget committed to build and renovate long-term-care facilities. These are but a few of the measures we have taken.

Closer to home, in Halton North, seniors understand and appreciate the changes that have happened over the last few years and recognize the differences between the governments that have delivered lip-service and those who have actually delivered. I'm pleased to say that they recognize that this government is the one that has delivered.

For over a decade our community was recognized as having the highest need for long-term-care beds in Ontario. The situation deteriorated to the point where the need became critical in our community. Government after government assured the people of Halton North their needs would be addressed and the situation remedied. Residents in Georgetown ran fund-raising campaigns in the hope their request to the province would some day be granted.

This government finally acted on the commitments of other governments and delivered the \$2 million to Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital to expand the Bennett Health Care Centre and provide the long-awaited, long-term-care beds our community so desperately needed. Residents in my community can now realize a greater possibility of caring for their loved ones closer to home when they retire.

If the members opposite want to talk about a government's blatant disrespect for seniors, then they should look no further than their own shameful records. They won't have to take my word for it, they can ask the people of Georgetown and Halton North about who actually kept their word and which government they felt, in the words of the members opposite, ripped them off. The true disrespect was in making commitments that past governments had no intention of keeping.

The opposition resolution is nothing more than a pathetic attempt by those proposing it to fabricate the image or façade that they actually care about seniors' issues. If they really cared, then they would have done more for seniors when they were in government.

In closing, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all seniors in my riding and indeed in all ridings in Ontario a very happy Seniors' Month this June. I encourage all Ontarians to join with me and recognize the contributions seniors have made in our individual ridings and in our communities, both today and in the past.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I think the record is clear. In the Common Sense revolutionary comic book, on page 6, they said, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." What did the Mike Harris gang do? The first thing they did to seniors when they got into power was to slap user fees on seniors for their drug care. They made them pay a \$100 deductible and then \$2 per prescription under a certain limit and \$6 over that. They broke that campaign pledge directly. It's right in your Common Sense comic book where you said "no new user fees." How plain can you be? You broke the faith with the seniors.

Luckily, through the opposition Liberals, we're able to hold your feet to the fire that you tried to pick the pockets of seniors across Ontario to the tune of \$30 million. Shame on you. You thought you could get away with it. You didn't get away with it, and today, total surrender. You put up the white flag because the seniors caught you. They caught you trying to take \$30 million from their pockets.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Got you.

Mr Colle: We got you right in the act and you had to sound the bugle of retreat. You got caught red-handed with that \$30-million ripoff of seniors. That's why you had to retract that. That's what the people of Ontario should know about. You tried to sneak that money out of seniors' pockets. That's a disgusting, shameful thing, to try and tell them that the calendar year only has eight and a half months. That's how blatant it was, to say the year only had eight and a half months. They didn't think seniors or the opposition would notice, that they could change the calendar. That's the kind of revolutionaries we have. We know Robespierre tried to change the calendar. We know Julius Caesar tried to change the calendar. Here these revolutionaries thought they could change the calendar so they could rip off seniors for \$30 million.

I'll tell you, seniors in my riding have had to make choices because of this blatant ripoff of seniors and their drug charges, their user fees. They are choosing whether to buy food or buy medicines or take those prescriptions to the drug store, because some of them cannot afford the

\$6.11. Some of them can't afford the \$100. Perhaps in some of the wealthier areas of this province where these members come from, they don't see that. I see seniors making choices every day; 75-year-old seniors with part-time jobs. It's getting to be like the United States where you see 70- and 80-year-old seniors out in parking lots with the shopping carts or bagging at grocery stores because they can't afford the health care in the United States. That's what it's coming to here. I've got 75-year-old seniors looking for part-time jobs because they're getting squeezed at both ends: This government has punished them with user fees, and at the other end, their children who have lost their jobs or may be reduced in their social assistance have to come back home or have to beg for a bit of money from mother and dad to pay for their kids' basic needs. So the seniors in this province are being squeezed at both ends by the Mike Harris gang.

1640

You really wonder at the schizophrenia here. Is it the Reform Preston Manning or is it the Charest Conservative directing this government? At the beginning, obviously, it was all Reform, Reform, Reform, but I think the Harris gang got quite a scare in the last week, because they knew that the people of Ontario did not buy the Reform message that the Reform Party is going to expand health care spending. They didn't buy the Jean Charest line that you can trust Tories with health care. In every riding across this province, people rejected that.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Can we have some order, please.

Mr Colle: The people of Ontario rejected the Reform-a-Tory approach. They don't trust Mike Harris with health care. They don't trust them, because the only thing they do is when they get caught, they retreat. We caught them here today big time.

The other thing in terms of health care is this whole package. Look at the downloading of seniors' housing. They're going to put that on to the municipalities. What is that going to do to seniors in housing? They're going to get rid of rent control. How many vulnerable seniors in our cities are going to be damaged by the Mike Harris agenda to get rid of rent control? How many seniors are going to be forced to put a mortgage on their houses because of the market value assessment this government is imposing on the seniors of Ontario?

They're going to ask them to put a deferral, which is a mortgage, on their homes. They have worked their whole life trying to get rid of that mortgage. Mike Harris comes along, and with market value now, he's going to force a lot of seniors to put a mortgage on their homes. This is what the Mike Harris gang is all about. They're about sneaking things through on the most vulnerable, hoping the most vulnerable won't notice.

What I'll tell the Mike Harris gang is people have caught on to your act. They know what you're about. You're not keeping your promises. The only promise you're keeping is the one to give a tax cut to your rich friends. Everything else is all smoke and mirrors, and on the opposition side, we'll catch you again. We caught you at this \$30-million bit of thievery, and we'll catch you again. We're not going to go away. The seniors aren't going to go away. We'll be there watching you, because you can't get away with it.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I too wish to participate briefly in this motion sponsored by the official opposition on a subject matter which is very current. To put it simply, let me begin by offering my congratulations to people in the Ministry of Health, who I suspect are giving their evenings, their weekends, are working overtime. Why? Because the government made a mistake. Oh, they will tell us that the seniors actually saved three and a half months, that the program was to be introduced last April, but because the fundamentals weren't in place the program was not to run, it was delayed until July. Since the intent did not reflect the carry-through to the implementation stage, the seniors benefited by three and a half months of free drugs.

The government screwed up big time, and today they're retreating because grey power got to them and said, "This is what you told me," and I'm quoting from the Toronto Star, a non-partisan daily, widely read and circulated: "Dart...No Laurels."

Jim Wilson, the man, the Minister of Health, who's responsible for the mess the government has created — one would say mugging was the order of the day, because people were told one year, and then you wait until the next year. July to April does not constitute a year. It's not your understanding of what a year is, it's not mine, it's not anyone else's. Let me quote:

"The government says it gave seniors a three-month free ride last year. But seniors say they were promised in July that their \$100 deductible would last for a full 12 months" — a very simple presentation, very factual. "The government should be honest and keep its word."

Then it goes on to say: "If an insurance company tried to charge customers for an annual deductible after only eight and a half months, it rightly would be accused of cheating. There is no difference here." So they say the parallel is filled with validity. They conclude by saying that they're cheats, they're thieves. That's what the Toronto Star says in its analogy, its parallel. If an insurance company was to do the same thing, ie, pick the pockets of people, let them pay the premiums for 12 months and after eight and a half months you dim the light, you mug them and you run away — the government admits that. At least that's a step in the right direction, and I say this candidly, in all honesty.

It's going to cost them. We know that anywhere between 6,000 and 7,000 new clients enter the drug program each and every month. The province is constituted of 11 million citizens and residents, and you know first hand what the demographics are telling us: The population is aging. We also know that this is an open-ended program, that the government is literally under a state of siege. I suspect that the drug program must be oversubscribed by some \$80 million, \$85 million, \$90 million, perhaps a figure surpassing \$100 million. They got caught. Let it be a lesson.

They pride themselves in saying that this is a government that does what they said they would do. There is a cohort out there, a group of citizens who looked at the agenda line by line and gave them kudos and congratulated the present government by saying: "You said you would do this; you've accomplished it. You've said you would do that, and you came through." There's another

majority of citizens of course in our democracy who are saying you have failed to deliver on what you said you would. But there is a malaise, and that's throughout, that while some people might say to the government you are attempting to deliver on your program, on your Common Sense Revolution, we disagree with the fashion, the style, when we have a growing disparity between the haves and the have-nots, when we see the galloping revenues of those who can run away from the field.

This government has reinforced the sentiment of the survival of the fittest. It didn't say that in the Common Sense Revolution. It didn't say that last year when it said to seniors, to people under the drug program, "We will be charging you because of the tax cut" — there again, its mesh, its web doesn't work in isolation — "because we need the revenue."

Notice that the provincial income tax, the PIT, which represents fully one third of government revenue — and as the instalments, as the cut starts to take place, the cuts that benefit the rich, you have to find the money someplace because you have to keep away the wolves. Those bond rating agencies can make your life very difficult. We have a growing economy, but we don't have corresponding growing revenues. We're beginning to see it every month now. The deficit is still the deficit, but the government will not cancel the remaining instalment on the tax cut and put it straight against the revenue. That's what you would do conducting your personal affairs and that's what I would do: reconcile the debt, not go and indulge in celebration and spend more money. But it becomes them.

1650

Who pays? There's no secret, no free lunch here. Who pays for this? The seniors. They made a touch on the people who can least defend themselves, those who are the most vulnerable. They got together, this cohort of powerful people, with friends of influence, friends of power, friends with money. I wouldn't put it past them — and I choose my words carefully — that there will be a time when reciprocity, when rewards will be the order of the day, la payola, by way of an insidious appointment someplace, a promotion, a bursary for daughters or sons of good families perhaps. But there will be some rewards. People will come calling.

In this case there is honour. Give your word and keep your word. "We shall charge you because we have to honour our commitment for the tax break" — to those who need it the least — "so we're going to start squeezing on services. We shall charge you, if you belong to the drug program, if you're an Ontarian 65 years of age or older, \$100 per annum."

You need not emanate from U of T or from Harvard or MIT to understand \$100 per annum. That's what you said. There is no denying this. But eight and a half months after, they come calling again. Knock, knock, "We need another \$100." "Excuse me, you're premature. It's only been eight and a half months." "Well, you see, we run a fiscal year. This is a matter of fiscality, Miss Jones. Fork over another \$100 on your meagre budget."

If you can't do it, what do you do, go without? You're 74. Heaven knows you've built and served the country

well. Unexpectedly, out of the blue, the government, the big guy, the thug, comes calling and says: "Miss Jones, the fact that you're frail and elderly is brushed aside. We want \$100 here." The collector comes calling. You say: "Mr Collector, you will have to wait another three and a half months because I already gave \$100 last year, and you said — I have the paper. Where is it? I have it right here." The government says: "No, no, no. The squeeze is on. This is a matter of fiscality. We run a fiscal year."

Common sense? Integrity? Is it honesty? No, I don't think so. Let me go back to the Star. It starts by saying: "Dart...no Laurels." "Health Minister Jim Wilson. For squeezing seniors. Last July, Wilson slapped new fees on the Ontario drug plan, which provides prescription drugs to seniors and welfare recipients." Seniors and those who are marginalized, who can't afford it, are on general assistance, on welfare. "Low-income seniors were forced to pay up to \$2 per prescription; most other seniors were forced to pay up to \$6.11 for each prescription after an annual \$100 deductible." That was last July. That's what the Star said. Eight and a half months later, seniors who use the plan were told that their deductible had expired and that they had to pay the \$100 again.

I don't see any valuable argument, in fact I'm surprised that time and time again both opposition parties responded to the many calls that people are — there's some panic out there. Imagine, if you can't trust them on a basic premise, on a fundamental, on the drug plan, next time they come will you believe them? But it comes out in the wash. It's been exposed. I don't believe the government really intended to do that.

The government sincerely believes that had the plan been implemented three and a half months earlier, they would have been right on track. I believe the government when they say this. Let's give them justice; it's due there. Perception is very important. You have to deliver. In this case they messed up. The ministry did not mess up. The opposition did not filibuster. It is the government that screwed up and today they have to backtrack.

They've put themselves under a state of siege. Thank heaven for the help of grey power, of the seniors who gathered by the hundreds and said to the minister: "We trusted you. If you want us to believe you next time, you are our minister, you are going to have to go in cabinet and kick what." They'll tell them they've made a mistake.

That goes to the very heart of the problem. It's very simple. It's a relationship, the trust between a citizen and the state and its government. If you're allowed to breach this, you do so at your own peril because you are entrusted, the people believed that you would.

You penalize them for 100 bucks. If they make more than \$16,000, they're rich, they pay an additional \$6.11 on drugs. Your physician tells you, he or she, that you need help in the form of medication, so you go into your purse, into your pocket, and you pay \$6.11 because it has been decreed that \$16,000 gives you that power to pay.

What do you sacrifice? Is it the cable television? Is it the call on a Sunday going from seven to five minutes, or no call, to a granddaughter or grandson who resides in another part of our vast and magnificent land or perhaps overseas? Those are the tradeoffs you have to make.

Those are the choices and governments are supposed to — they're elected to help everyone from the very rich, the very powerful to those who are trying to hang on.

With the help of the sponsors of the revolution, we will be watching closely. They've made a mistake, at least they've acquiesced to that and they're rectifying it. Not a proud moment but let it be a lesson that in the future this kind of endeavour, this kind of timetable will be given a second and third scrutiny before it reaches the marketplace.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to congratulate the member for Yorkview for bringing this topic forward. All topics involving seniors are of great interest to all sides of the House. Yes, I know the opposition has taken great delight today in talking about how they've caught us and they're watching us, and how they've caught us and we're in retreat, all of these wonderful words, and the announcement by the minister today does in fact make the motion we're debating today rather redundant. However, I think it's useful to talk about this issue and a number of other issues involving seniors.

I quite frankly can say that, yes, I've had the same comments the member for Yorkview has had from seniors in my riding where they've expressed the same concerns he has been putting forward. I've spoken to the minister, Mr Jackson, and contrary to you, and I know you have your job as a member of the opposition to say, "We caught you and you're in retreat," I have more respect for the minister and I believe the minister has responded to a number of concerns not only from members of the opposition but from seniors around this province who have raised this issue with all members of this House. However, we all have our message that we have to put forward. I congratulate the minister for responding to the concerns that have come from all corners of this province.

1700

Notwithstanding all these comments back and forth between the opposition and the government members today, the fact is that Ontario continues to have the most generous drug plan in Canada. No matter what you say, you have to acknowledge that. Look at some of the things that go on in some of the other provinces. For example, the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan charges seniors a \$200 deductible and then, on top of that, 35% of all costs above that. The average low-income senior in Ontario pays \$4 a month for ODB-listed medications worth a total of \$753. In Saskatchewan, for the same quality of medication, a low-income senior living in a care centre would pay \$540.

Then you look to some of the other provinces, where these things are much higher than they are in Ontario. For example, in Nova Scotia, each senior must pay the government \$215 just to get on the plan, and then they've got to pay 20% of the cost of medications after that. In the case of our average senior, that would work out to \$350. In Manitoba, the average senior would pay \$355; that's \$130 plus 30%. The cost in Alberta would be \$625; that's 30%, up to \$25 per prescription.

I could go on, but clearly the reason I list those facts is that Ontario continues to have the most generous drug plan in Canada. I congratulate both Minister Wilson and

Minister Jackson for maintaining that and for responding to the concerns that have come from the seniors of this province.

And yes, I congratulate people like the member for Yorkview in his resolution today. There's no doubt that the opposition has expressed the concerns that have come from their constituents. I have expressed the concerns that have come from our constituents. The minister has responded to that, and I congratulate him for that.

The minister is going to conclude the comments today with respect to this debate. I'd just like to say a few other things, which may be slightly off topic, although I can tell you that many members around the province hold seniors' seminars in which the topic raised today by the member for Yorkview is discussed. I'll hold two seminars. I held one about two weeks ago in Bolton, at the Caledon seniors' centre at Rotary Place, at which we discussed a number of topics. The minister appeared at that seminar, and he was asked a number of questions. This was one of them. He has responded to that. The topics of naturopathic medicine, pharmacology and nutrition were discussed. The new Headwaters Health Care Centre was discussed. These topics that affected seniors were put forward.

Just to give a bit of publicity to a seminar that is coming forward in my riding, and then I will conclude, I wish to advise members that I'm holding a further seminar on Thursday, June 19, from 7:30 to 9:30 pm, at the Orangeville and district seniors' centre. This is organized by me and by seniors and by the seniors centre, and the topics at that session will be nutrition, diabetes, naturopathic medicine, community care and access. I would encourage members to hold these types of seminars, in which this type of debate that the member for Yorkview has brought forward can come forward.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's a pleasure for me today to speak on behalf of the seniors I represent in Essex county. It's refreshing to hear the member for Dufferin-Peel and to follow him, quite frankly, because he has pointed out that he hears the same things I do in my riding, and I'm sure every member of the House hears these concerns that seniors bring to us.

I'm pleased to congratulate my colleague from Yorkview, Mario Sergio, for his persistence on this particular issue and the fact that the minister, as has been suggested, has listened not only to the opposition in this Legislature but also to seniors across the province. That's good to see and good to hear, that the system can work this way.

The fact, as was mentioned, that we have the best drug plan for seniors in the Dominion of Canada is not only surprising, but it is the way it should be. We often tout ourselves as the richest province in the Dominion of Canada, and therefore it would seem only reasonable that the richest province in the Dominion of Canada would be able to provide the best services to its constituents.

Today we've talked about the broader issue as well of user fees. This is one part of it, the fact that initially the government was only going to allow the \$100 deductible, which was supposed to be an annual fee, for eight and a half months. As some would say, perhaps the government got caught with its hand in the cookie jar. When this was pointed out to them, they listened, and I'm glad they did.

The Common Sense Revolution did say on page 6, as was pointed out earlier by another colleague, under the "Health Care" heading, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." This goes to a more deep-rooted part of the problem. If the Premier and the government members had campaigned across this province with their Common Sense Revolution and said, "When we are elected, we are going to collect a \$100 user fee on the senior drug plan for those making in excess of \$16,000 and some odd," and if you had been elected on that, we wouldn't even be here debating this today. But you weren't elected on that. You said very clearly, "No new user fees."

The government uses the term that this isn't a user fee, it's a copayment. Mike Harris said at one time that a user fee by any other name is a user fee. I suggest that if it looks like a duck and walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck. Therefore, whether you call it a copayment or whether you call it a deductible or whether you call it a user fee, it's all one and the same.

That's part of the problem we want to point out today, that governments should mean what they say and say what they mean. If you had meant at that time that you were going to charge a user fee on the senior drug plan and you were elected on that basis, I would say, "More power to you," but frankly, I don't think that was the case. That's part of what we're debating here today.

I'm afraid that what has happened with many of the charges that have been put upon the citizens of Ontario is they have resulted from the fact that the richest in this province are receiving a tax cut. The fact that the government is going to go out and borrow \$20 billion and increase our debt from \$100 billion to \$120 billion to do this may not matter much, only to those of us who try and keep track of how those things go on in the Legislature. But you campaigned on a tax cut in the Common Sense Revolution and you're giving a tax cut. So I just say the fair thing would have been that if you campaigned on no user fees, you don't charge any user fees.

1710

I'm glad to see that we're debating this resolution after the fact that the minister got up in the House today and said he had listened and was willing to change. As a matter of fact, I wish that would happen on more of the issues that come before us and that have been discussed by many of my colleagues today.

In the few moments I have left I'd like to as well point out correspondence I've received from seniors in Essex county that I don't doubt has been received in another form by many members on both sides of the House from seniors in their particular riding. This happens to involve long-term care. How does that involve user fees on the drug plan? It's all in one. It's all concern for our senior citizens. I want to point out that these issues, like the concern for long-term care from the committee of the Sun Parlour Home, are as important to us today as are user fees that are being placed upon our seniors in many other areas.

I've received this correspondence, as I said, from the seniors at the Sun Parlour Home for Senior Citizens. Mary Unrau, an individual, took the time to tell me that it angers her that the government has cut funds for health care, that the government will spend more per day on

persons in correctional facilities who have taken away from families and communities than the people who no longer can care for themselves. These are the continuing concerns that we have to bring before this Legislature and that I hope the Minister of Finance, the Premier and the minister for seniors issues will listen to as well.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, in writing to Mr Wilson, the Minister of Health, not only pointed out the discrepancy in the deductible that was being attempted at the time, but went on to say, "It is obvious to us that your ministry has compounded the ill will created among seniors by your ill-advised policy of charging them for prescription drugs despite your government's promise not to levy a user fee for health care."

When the Minister of Health stands in his place and says, "We've consulted with seniors and they agree with this \$100 user fee," it would appear as though the Canadian Association of Retired Persons disagrees with that. United Senior Citizens of Ontario Inc has said, "What we are currently in the midst of is an argument about the size of user fees. The USCO wants injected into the debate the 'use' of user fees. We have said before and we will say again, the USCO is adamantly opposed to user fees in our health care system. Evidence gathered to date proves that user fees do not work and place an unfair burden on the poor."

We've listened today. Let's listen to our seniors tomorrow.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I'm pleased to participate in the debate and I'm pleased to see that the minister responsible is here today. I want to ask him if he has his white flag and if he's here to beat a hasty retreat, as was clearly evident earlier in the remarks that the minister made.

The government got caught. That's what happened here today. The government can give us the rhetoric about how they listen to seniors and on and on. The government got caught. They introduced a scheme that was supposed to be a year long, where seniors who had to make a payment thought they were going to get a full year's coverage for their drugs, and then they found out that eight and a half months into that scheme the government came knocking again and wanted another 100 bucks up front for those seniors who are living by themselves and make over \$16,000 or for those seniors who are a couple who make over \$24,000. The government said: "Pay up again. We haven't taken enough from you in the first round."

The government has got so much bad publicity about the way in which it has ripped off seniors with respect to this user fee system that the government has had no choice but to back down, and that's what's happened today. It has nothing to do with the government listening and caring about seniors and being compassionate and worried about how they're going to pay; the government got caught and it was shown again how incompetent this government is, not only with respect to this plan but with many others that it's trying to implement.

In order to save face here this afternoon, the minister had to come in and had to make the announcement he did. I feel sorry for him because really it should have been the Minister of Health, who has been trying to tell

us for the last couple of days how wonderful this copayment plan is, who should have had to do the dirty work in here today and explain why the government was backing down.

The point has been made here this afternoon but I'll reinforce it again: This party, before the last election, in the Common Sense Revolution and again during the election campaign, made a very specific promise to the people of Ontario. This government said there would be no new user fees under a Mike Harris government. Well, what have we got? Across any number of ministries, we have a whole host, a whole range of new user fees being imposed upon the public of Ontario. In the health field, we have a government that after one year in office decided it was going to go after seniors and make the seniors of this province, many of whom are the most vulnerable, many of whom live in poverty in this province, pay a user fee for the medication they need. So much for the government promise. So much for the promise in the Common Sense Revolution and the promise made by this government during the election campaign.

You know what? I think a lot of seniors out there who are worried about the high cost of medication, who are worried about the amount of medication they have to take and who don't have the wherewithal financially to pay probably voted for the Conservatives, because they believed this group when they went out on the road and said, "There will be no new user fees." Very specifically under the health portion of the manifesto it says, on page 6, and I'll just refresh your memory with this, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." That's what this group promised. Well, this group didn't deliver. Why? Because this government is far more interested in living up to its tax cut promise than it is in ensuring that seniors who need medication, who have medication prescribed to them by their physicians, have the financial wherewithal to pay for that. This government is committed to one thing: to make sure that it can give a big tax break to the people who need it the least in this province, to the people who have the most in this province, at the expense of seniors, at the expense of clients of the family support plan, at the expense of single moms, at the expense of many, many groups who do not have the financial resources to pay for this new user fee or many others.

Right from day one, the way the government handled this new user fee medication scheme just showed its incompetence again and again. There we were in July last year with this government trying to implement a scheme whereby every senior in the province was automatically put into the higher income category, and then those seniors had to make all the efforts, go to all the work and all the expense of trying to prove that they should be in the lower-income category for the purpose of this plan. I can't tell you how many seniors we had who came into our office, seniors who can't read, seniors whose first language is French, seniors whose first language is Italian, who didn't know the first thing about what kind of documentation they were supposed to try and put together and send to the Ministry of Health so they could prove that they should be in the lower-income category.

We spent weeks filling out forms for people, trying to help them, trying to tell them what information they would need, all because the government thought it was more important to automatically put all the seniors in the high-income category rather than to try and sort out who would be in the lower-income category as soon as this started.

We put a proposal to the government from a pharmacist in our riding which would have had pharmacists taking income information from seniors who were coming in and automatically overriding the government computers so that those people could get medication without having to pay the \$100 up front and then be reimbursed months and months later by this government. The Minister of Health refused to look at that scheme. I can tell you that in our riding there were numbers and numbers of seniors who went without the medication they needed because they could not pay the \$100 up front, nor should they have been paying the \$100 up front because they were in the lower-income category.

This scheme is nothing more than another effort on the part of this government to raise the funds necessary to try and finance the phoney tax scheme because, for this government, the payoff to their corporate friends who supported the campaign is far more important than it is to ensure that the most vulnerable in this province, the people who have the less amount of income, get the kinds of services they need and deserve to have in the province of Ontario. That's the shame of it.

1720

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, at the outset I'd like to thank all members of the House who participated in the debate this afternoon. It's a great honour for me as the minister responsible for Ontario's 1.4 million seniors to have made the announcement earlier today as it relates to management of the Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors. It is also an honour for me to have been travelling the province during the course of my 13 years as a member in this House with a specific keen interest in and support for seniors in this province.

I've learned a lot from the seniors of this province and I've had occasion in this House to bring their concerns to the floor of this Legislature, both in my role for 11 years on the opposition benches and, more recently, as a member of our government's cabinet. There are many things that I learned both from the seniors in my riding and from my own family experience growing up. Coming from a family of eight children, growing up in a period of time like today's seniors, during the 1950s, they were raising families like mine, with a lot of children, before there was OHIP, before there were drug plans, before there were dental plans, before there were all these safety nets that society offered and governments promised.

The truth is that our parents spent difficult times making sure that they could balance their books. They burned a lot of midnight oil worrying about whether they could afford certain things while we, our baby boomers, were nicely tucked away upstairs in our bedrooms oblivious to the problems our parents were going through balancing their books and tightening their belts. That generation of seniors has taught a lot of us about the importance and the values associated with setting priorities.

Just as our parents had to sit down at the kitchen table and look at the difficult challenges facing them, they made difficult decisions and priorities because they knew they had to make a mortgage payment, they had to put food on our table, they had to have enough money in the bank for a catastrophic illness that might affect us. They did all that planning, and many had to put away additional dollars and scrimp and save so that their daughters could go to university, an experience their mothers would never have the opportunity for in their lifetime.

What did we learn, as a generation, from our seniors? That in difficult times they learned how to set priorities. The province of Ontario was no different because we, as a government, when we opened our books as a household in this province, realized we had over \$100 billion accumulated debt and the largest single program in our household budget was paying debt service to the tune of \$10 billion a year.

What did seniors teach us? Seniors taught us that you set priorities and this government reacted the exact same way. What did it do? It set as its number one priority health care support for the citizens of Ontario. Our number one priority, of all the programs that this government was going to protect, enhance and invest, would be health care. It has been stated many times that \$17.4 billion was the amount of money. The former Premier, the leader of the government of the day, Bob Rae, indicated that \$17.4 billion was sufficient to manage health care. The official opposition, when they were campaigning, indicated that \$17.4 billion was sufficient to manage the health care portfolio.

Here we are, two years later, having faced a \$2.1-billion cut in transfers from the federal government, harshly affecting our province, our government stepped up to that challenge and injected additional dollars into that — \$1 billion that we've invested — so that we're now spending \$18.5 billion in health care.

If you analyse where we've spent those moneys, the seniors of this province know where we have invested those moneys: \$170 million for long-term care. I stood on that side of the House 10 years ago Saturday and that date was the anniversary of when Ron Van Horne stood up in this Legislature and promised one-window access to long-term care for this province. The seniors of this province waited through five years of a Liberal government and five years of an NDP government and they still didn't have long-term care supports.

The number one priority for the Mike Harris government was to deliver the promise to expand funding and services, to bring in an equity model so that underserved regions would get additional dollars to have a common assessment tool so that a senior citizen in Windsor, Ontario, was assessed the same way as a senior in Hamilton, Ontario, and that fairness principle would apply for the first time in this province, to acknowledge growth in high-growth areas for hospitals, to be the first government to acknowledge that with a growth fund.

These are the kinds of priorities. We went further for seniors: the most comprehensive, pneumococcal vaccination program on the face of the earth. Do you know that in the second-last year the NDP were in power, 3,894 seniors in this province paid for the pneumonia vac-

cine — 3,900-and-some seniors? Last year our government made a commitment to 1.2 million seniors, beginning with the most frail elderly, at a cost of \$20 million, to reduce the morbidity rate, the death rate of seniors who are afflicted with pneumonia, and we're very proud of that program. We're very proud of the program of investing \$35 million to literally eradicate cardiac care waiting lists, to inject \$15 million into dialysis support.

The members opposite have parents and grandparents like I do. They know these investments are primarily going to be used by senior citizens in the province, and so this government has strategically invested more dollars to senior support services. I mention as I did earlier, and I quote from the Hamilton Spectator of May 30 when they talk about the recent federal election — I'm not talking about the Ontario Liberal Party when I'm talking about this; I'm talking about our federal government — "The Liberals have been downright dishonest on the issue and are not the guardians of health care as they claim to be."

The only province in Canada that has increased its funding to health care this year over last, in spite of all provinces getting the federal cuts, was the Mike Harris government, that has increased funding to health care in this province.

Now I come to the issue of the drug plan. Many members in this House, and I see members opposite who were here when I was elected in 1985, are familiar with the development of the drug plan. I share with the members of the House that the fastest-growing program, the fastest-growing costs in health care today are in drug utilization in Ontario. We are the most overmedicated society on the face of the earth by every single benchmark. Physicians will tell us that. Clinical evaluators will tell us that. Our seniors are taking more drugs than any other seniors in the world and there are health consequences to that and there are taxpayer consequences.

It has been alluded to in this House that our Ontario drug benefit plan is the lowest cost in North America and in many respects in the world when you consider that one million social assistance recipients in this province are paying \$2 per prescription; one million social assistance recipients, nearly one million senior citizens whose incomes are greater than \$16,000, are paying the \$100 deductible premium on their insurance plan, and there are a half a million low-income seniors who are only paying the \$2 per script, the lowest in Canada. Other provinces, it's been alluded to, have been charging considerably more.

Governments in the past have reacted to this plan. I remember in 1986 being on a committee during minority government when we dealt with Bills 54 and 55, two drug bills. I remember being on that committee, one of two Tories, along with Mel Swart, a gentleman whom I to this day credit with being one of Ontario's and Canada's outstanding consumer advocates. At the time, the Liberal government of the day under Murray Elston was proposing to shuffle the deck on the drug plans and cause a reduction in the prescribing fee for ODB and increase the costs for the cash-paying customer. When I brought this to Mel Swart's attention he was upset and he spoke out immediately against it. But if you know the

times we lived in, you couldn't pass a bill in this Legislature unless you had two political parties agree to it.

Mel had declared himself. This was an offence to consumers. It was a wrong strategy. You know, the hook came down as soon as Mel was seen on TV. Dave Cooke came down, pulled him off the committee and that was the last that we saw of Mel on the issue of Bills 54 and 55.

Mr Pouliot: This is most unfair.

Hon Mr Jackson: Well, it is fair because still to this day Mel and I talk about that incident. The truth of the matter is that the strategies involved by governments — when dealing with this mushrooming cost of health care as it relates to drug plans, every single province in Canada has done one of two things, or sometimes both: They have increased the copayment or they have reduced and withdrawn drugs.

In fact today in the response from the member for London Centre — I quote roughly from her Hansard — she said: “The Minister” — meaning me — “is going to have to look long and hard at de-listing more drugs” — if I want to balance the account when in estimates. I'm not taking the advice of the member for London Centre.

1730

We were underbudgeted. In other words, we overspent on the drug plan in this province — which costs us \$1.1 billion now — we overspent that budget by \$127 million. Did we remove drugs when we were faced with this financial cost we didn't anticipate? No. Did we increase the copayment from \$2 like every other government in Canada has done? No, we did not. We found those savings in other programs of government and moved it into the health care budget and paid the bill for the drugs for the seniors and the low-income families in this province.

We know that the costs are still going to escalate because we've added 460 new drugs to that plan. So we will not take the advice of the NDP and we will not do what the Liberals did in 1988, which brings me to the former member for Oriole, Elinor Caplan, who was this province's health care minister. I'll tell you what Elinor Caplan did. Elinor Caplan decided that, if these drugs keep costing us more money and more money, let's put a fence up and let's not allow these drugs into our province. As a result, Elinor Caplan decided to hold up the Ontario drug formulary for an entire year, and drugs backed up and backed up. I know within 24 hours we're going to find out if she's our new national health minister, and I pray to God she's not, based on her performance in this province.

I want to share one other point about what's been going on in terms of the drug plan in this province. The previous government was aware of these escalating costs. In some years they were going up 24%. To be fair, I have listened in this debate to three former members of the cabinet of Bob Rae, and I would have hoped when they were lecturing us on this subject that they would have been candid and forthright enough to have shared with this Assembly that in fact when their government was assessing this problem, they had a meeting, a round table, a consultation process — and I have it from the individuals who sat at that table — and the NDP govern-

ment with the support of the NDP Minister of Health was planning to bring in the copayment and the user fee, as they have so articulately referred to it.

What I find fascinating is that the political party with its grass-roots leanings was setting its copayment at \$6 per script; three times greater than the one this party brought in. Some of the seniors' organizations I've talked to said they referred to it as “six dollar Rae.” The truth of the matter is that I also recall a Minister of Health in the NDP government who, to her credit, had expressed concern about the drug-pricing policies —

Mr Pouliot: Somebody is lying. You'd better straighten this out for the record. This is very unfair.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Margaret Marland): Minister, excuse me. I ask the member for Lake Nipigon to withdraw his comment.

Mr Pouliot: Madam, with respect, I am forced to withdraw the truth. The member said we did, and we did not. I plead with you, Madam.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. Are you withdrawing your comment?

Mr Pouliot: You know who is telling the truth, Madam.

The Acting Speaker: The member, I will give you one more opportunity to withdraw.

Mr Pouliot: Out of respect for you and your high office, I shall withdraw, Madam.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Jackson: The member opposite, having been in the Rae cabinet, is quite familiar with these concerns I'm raising. He'll also be familiar with the concern expressed by his health minister at the time, who's still a member of this assembly, who expressed concern about drug pricing. This was very well discussed in the media, that all was well in terms of making adjustments to reduce the costs of drugs, when she got sandbagged by her Premier, who indicated that there would be no adjustment to the protections which the drug manufacturers enjoy in terms of pricing.

Pricing is different from patent protection, and I haven't raised the whole issue that senior citizens have given me as a concern with the broken promise of the federal Liberal government to modify C-91, to modify drug patent legislation in this province. This is drug pricing which is in the control of the current government. Four hundred and sixty-five new drugs have been put on to the Ontario drug benefit formulary. Seniors have indicated no increase in copayments and we have honoured both those commitments because we are improving the health quality of seniors by providing them the access to the drugs they need.

The members opposite should be aware that the drug plan is suffering under tremendous pressures. I'll give you a couple of examples. We have to be able to ensure that seniors get access to these drugs. When Losec, one drug that's on the market, came in for approval, they said it would cost us \$2 million. Losec is for people with gastroenteritis problems and with ulcers. After a full year on the ODB, the cost to taxpayers for that one drug was over \$50 million.

We spend \$13 million in this province every year on Tylenol. The taxpayers pay for that to make it available.

The most expensive drug we have in our drug benefit formulary is one that's used for Gaucher's disease and it's called Ceredase. It costs \$200,000 a year for this one drug. We've got 20 citizens in our province being kept alive by this drug.

I've talked to families, because I have two in my riding, whose children are being kept alive. Their costs are about \$150,000 a year. They understand the importance of making sure we have a drug plan that is comprehensive enough that it reaches out to everyone. When the senior who sits at the end of her granddaughter's bed says to me, "Cam, my granddaughter wouldn't be alive if this drug wasn't in the plan," she's not about to complain about her \$2 copayment or user fee or whatever you want to call it. She is grateful that she lives in Ontario.

There are other drugs — Aricept. I'm sure members opposite are aware that there is a drug in the United States that will deal with Alzheimer's. There are about 12,000 to 14,000 Ontario citizens currently affected with that level of dementia. We need that drug in this province. As soon as the federal government approves that drug, we want to bring it in in Ontario. What do we think the costs are going to be? Maybe \$12 million, \$20 million, \$50 million a year, and nobody has budgeted for it. But one declaration that we have made clearly to the seniors of this province through our actions of the last two years is that we are not going to queue up any of these drugs. There is not one single drug available that we have held up and is queued up. We're very proud of that record.

The challenge for us in this Parliament on all sides of the House is to participate in that debate to ensure that we strengthen the Ontario drug benefit plan.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): But you promised no user fees.

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Hon Mr Jackson: The member opposite who talks about user fees should be realizing how important it is to strengthen the Ontario drug benefit plan.

I talked with Dr David Naylor yesterday, who is the head of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Ontario. He has been studying the impact of our copayment. He immediately advised me that ours are the lowest in the entire country. He confirmed that he was pleasantly surprised that there were no adverse conditions associated with the \$2 copayment. This is not to be said about jurisdictions which have created financial barriers and have removed drugs from their formulary. That, he said, was bad health policy, but what's happening in Ontario is not.

What I am concerned about is the quality and the level of the debate we've had in the House today. If, as they say, members opposite have been listening to seniors, I wonder why they haven't articulated some of the concerns they've been expressing to me for the last decade.

Seniors have indicated to me, for example, their concern — we don't even have to look further than a press conference on May 14 of this year, when the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations said the issues that are of concern to them include the federal government's refusal to deal with C-91. They expressed

concern about the copayment, but they went on to ask why governments in the past have failed to implement the British Columbia model of reference-based pricing; why governments have failed to pressure the federal government to repeal C-91; why they don't demand that pharmacists lower their dispensing fees — I'm quoting directly from what the seniors' groups' own policy resolutions have said; why we aren't educating seniors about economic and physical costs of overmedication and overuse of drugs; and why we're not looking at a different system of payment to physicians in Ontario.

If you listened to the concerns of seniors articulated by the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, they will confirm that being the most overmedicated society on the face of the earth, as we are here, has certain health consequences. We know, for example — and I'm quoting directly from the seniors themselves; I'll quote directly from one of the seniors' organizations — that prescription drugs account for 15% along with doctors' fees. We're spending the same amount of money on doctors' fees in this province as we're spending for drugs. They go on and indicate that seniors use proportionately far larger amounts of prescription drugs than any other group of Canadians.

"We take the legislative review process seriously. We are deeply concerned that provincial drug plans will crack under the strain of the costs of prescription drugs and that seniors will have limited access to the drugs they need to maintain their health and independence." This was a statement made to the federal government in a recent review. They failed to deal with the critical issues of drug pricing, how drugs are dispensed and why we have no prescribing guidelines in this province.

Mr Pouliot: It's a big lobby, eh, Cam?

Hon Mr Jackson: Certainly it's a big lobby, but the bigger lobby is the one that should be focused on the health needs of seniors in this province. Given the fact that the former NDP government did all the workup on this and the report was never released — it was never released.

Mr Pouliot: Are you a doctor, sir?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, the minister has the floor, and interjections are out of order.

Hon Mr Jackson: Ontario has taken a proactive approach to fortifying in its budget more dollars to preserve the Ontario drug benefit plan. We have done that in spite of the federal cuts and we have done it in spite of the assertions made by the federal government. They put about \$40 some-odd million into the federal budget to undertake a series of studies about a national pharmacare program.

Just so members of the House understand what this is all about, a pharmacare program is about everybody in society getting on one drug plan. The current lowest price in Canada, which is here in Ontario, will be driven up. The proof is in the actual federal government's final report on the national forum on health, where it says, "To finance pharmacare, we are proposing a shift over time from private spending by individuals directly through their private insurance companies to public spending either through more tax increases or higher premiums or both." That's in a federal government report.

I have yet to find a senior who doesn't already understand that the federal government's pharmacare proposals

would be disastrous for the Ontario drug benefit plan in this province.

We have indicated that our government clearly, when it developed this program on the Ontario drug benefit plan, let the pharmacists, the politicians and the media know that the anniversary date for this program was going to be April 1. We did a very poor job, and we're the first to admit it, communicating that to our seniors. We listened when they told us how surprised many of them were, but I must remind members that when Mae Harman was here in the Legislature last week representing her organization, from the Ontario seniors' coalition, she indicated right in the Hansard of that press conference that the plan was to start on April 1. She acknowledged that.

This government has reacted on a principle of fairness and today announced the adjustment so that seniors will get a full 16 months under this plan. We went further. We extended by a further two weeks. More important, we are prorating it for seniors who are entering the plan.

I must caution members in this House that there is more to the issue of the Ontario drug benefit plan than a \$2 copayment, the lowest in Canada. There are issues that seniors themselves have expressed. Why has no government to date, at the federal or provincial level, been listening to them about why they are so overmedicated, why prescribing guidelines aren't here, why we're not reviewing drug pricing mechanisms? The Ontario Pharmacists' Association has put forward several proposals and previous governments have not listened to them. In fact, this government is very proud of its fortifying and supporting financially the Ontario drug benefit plan. Unlike the Liberals, whose debate today had more to do with winning votes, the Ontario government is more interested in winning over the health needs of seniors in this province.

Mr Crozier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: according to the rules, a member cannot impute the motive of another member, and I'd ask the minister to withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: I did not hear any honourable member's motives being imputed.

Mr Crozier: He said I did it for votes. I did it on behalf of my seniors. That's what I did it for.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, do you wish to withdraw?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It is my pleasure and privilege to join this debate and to support the good work of my colleagues who have spent considerable time in gaining a much better understanding of the issues of concern to Ontario's seniors and doing their very best to advance those concerns both in and outside this Legislature.

I think the best place to begin in all these kinds of discussions is with the Conservative political equivalent of the Book of Genesis, and that's the Common Sense Revolution. If you turn to page 6 of this document, the Common Sense Revolution, it says here under the health care section, "Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." Also, it's of interest to find that on page 10, under

a section entitled Seniors and the Disabled, it reads as follows: "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut."

Those were serious and very important promises made within the context of the last provincial election. They were made for one purpose and one purpose alone, and that of course was to encourage people, seniors in particular, to vote for Mike Harris and to help him form a government. Many people acted on that promise.

Clearly I am disappointed now to inform the people who are watching, if they do not already understand this, that the Premier broke his promise. He broke his promise to seniors and to the disabled in this province of Ontario. What he did was introduce a \$225-million new drug user fee for seniors, the disabled and the poor.

1750

What we're talking about here, so people understand this, is that if there is somebody living in this province who is a senior, who is earning just a little over \$16,000, hardly what you'd call living in the lap of luxury, they have been called upon now by this government to reach into their wallets and to remove from there \$100 on an annual basis. In addition to that, they're going to have to fork over \$6.11 each time they have a prescription filled and that's to pay for the dispensing fee.

We're not talking here about something that is a matter of desire or want on the part of our seniors in particular. We understand that as people get older they place a greater demand on our health care system through no fault of their own whatsoever. Experts tell us that seniors on average receive 27 prescriptions every year. That really adds up. Not only are they looking at \$100 for an annual deductible but they're looking at roughly \$163, \$164 for dispensing fees on top of that if you find yourself within the average. This from the Premier who promised there would be no new user fees and this from the Premier who promised that aid would not be cut to seniors and the disabled.

I think it's also important to understand that we heard in this House today — of course now we're supposed to be on bended knee and exceptionally grateful for an announcement made by the minister responsible for seniors' issues in this province. What he did at the very last minute, under intense pressure from seniors' groups and members of my party, was to decide to issue a "Reverse engines" order. At some point along the way, I guess fairness somehow enters into what it is that government does and somehow keeping a promise becomes somewhat of a factor in governing.

The unfortunate thing is that this minister only responded to public pressure. What he should have said the very first time this issue was raised at the cabinet table was: "Hang on a second. I am the one who is duly charged as having the responsibility in government to protect the interests of seniors and the disabled. Not only did we make a promise during the course of the campaign not to charge user fees and not to cut assistance to seniors and the disabled, but I, as the protector of seniors' interests in this province, feel that wouldn't be a right thing to do. I feel that would be a dishonourable thing to do." But no, apparently that argument was never made.

We had the scenario where seniors in this province were not only faced with user fees they were promised

they would never have to face, but in addition to that they were faced with an annual fee which suddenly they were being double-charged for. It was supposed to last for 12 months, but suddenly the Minister of Health, obviously in collusion with the minister responsible for seniors' affairs, said, "No, no, what we'll do is hit them twice and we'll double-charge them for a period of some four months' time." All I can say to that is, shame on the Minister of Health, shame on the minister responsible for seniors' issues and shame on the government.

At some point in time, I think it's important to remember why the heck we're here. Surely one of the reasons we are here is to look out for the interests of the people who happen to populate this province. I think one of the special reasons we are here is to help defend the interests of those who are particularly vulnerable, whether those be our very young, whether those be our seniors or whether those happen to be our disabled.

What you have here is a government that in one fell swoop has managed to attack two of our most vulnerable groups who find themselves in need of our protection. They are not groups out there to be preyed upon by government; they are groups that need our protection. In these particular circumstances this government failed to recognize that obligation, failed to recognize that why we are here is to make sure above all else that those who cannot survive the market forces, those who cannot survive the battle of the various strong interests in this province receive our care and our protection.

The other thing that I think the minister responsible for seniors issues and the Minister of Health ought to keep in mind is that according to a report recently issued by the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, there has been a change in the number of prescriptions and a change in the quantity of drugs dispensed since the new user fees were introduced by this government. In fact, the number of prescriptions has fallen by 14.2% and the quantity of drugs dispensed has fallen by 6%. We've got to ask ourselves, is this for the greater good?

I don't think it's too hard to surmise, and this isn't pure conjecture, that there are seniors in this province today who are saying: "Because I've got to pay for that dispensing fee and because I'm faced with a \$100 deductible and I'm being called upon to make choices between perhaps food for the day, making a rent payment" — God knows what else you've got to pay for in order to live out some kind of a meagre existence — "I'm not going to the drugstore today. I'm not going to have that prescription filled." That represents the height of unfairness.

We're talking about a group of people who through no fault of their own have no choice in this matter whatsoever, the only sin they happen to have committed is that they have gotten old, and suddenly they find that they're in need of greater assistance in terms of health care and that they need drugs, medication. They need to have prescriptions filled. What we ought to be doing in those kinds of circumstances is not driving seniors away from seeking the kind of health care they need. We ought to be saying: "We understand your struggle. We're there for you. It's important to us that you seek health care, that you have your prescriptions filled, and we're going

to ensure that happens by not putting any kind of impediment, obstacle between you and quality health care."

In the long run, we should understand that actually there are savings involved. If we have to look at every thing through the economic prism, if that becomes an obsession, then let's understand that there are actually cost savings to be had when our seniors have the health care to which they are properly entitled.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sergio has moved opposition day number 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; it will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1758 to 1803.

The Acting Speaker: Would all those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Boyd, Marion	Gerretsen, John	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Grandmaître, Bernard	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Pouliot, Gilles
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wildman, Bud
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Wood, Len

The Acting Speaker: Would all those opposed to the motion please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ross, Lillian
Baird, John R.	Hamick, Charles	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Jim	Hudak, Tim	Shea, Derwyn
Carroll, Jack	Jackson, Cameron	Sheehan, Frank
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, David	Smith, Bruce
Clement, Tony	Jordan, W. Leo	Spina, Joseph
Danford, Harry	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Doyle, Ed	Leach, Al	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Leadston, Gary L.	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Fisher, Barbara	McLean, Allan K.	Vankoughnet, Bill
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Villeneuve, Noble
Fox, Gary	O'Toole, John	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Pettit, Trevor	Wood, Bob
Grimmett, Bill	Rollins, E.J. Douglas	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 53.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being close to 6 o'clock, I declare that the House is adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 1807.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
200	10426	1	53	The tartan was designed by Mr James MacNeil of
200	10426	1	55	at the University of Guelph, and Mr MacNeil is in the
200	10430	2	40	MacNeil in the audience today, who was instrumental in
201	10499	1	26	Bill 139, An Act to promote the conservation of fish

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of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

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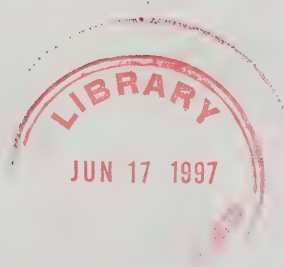
Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 11 June 1997

Mercredi 11 juin 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 11 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 11 juin 1997

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOE McCAFFERY

James Mr J. Bradley (St Catharines): One of St Catharines's most beloved citizens passed away today after a courageous battle with cancer. Mayor Joe McCaffery, as he is still affectionately known, served the people of St Catharines with dedication, commitment and enthusiasm on city council from 1980 to 1994, when he retired undefeated after three terms as mayor.

No problem was too small, no individual too insignificant to merit the attention of Mayor Joe. If ever the label of "grass-roots politician" suited a person, it fit perfectly for Joe McCaffery. There was nothing phoney about Joe; what you saw was what you got, and it was 100% genuine.

Joe was born in Western Hill and proud of it. He never forgot his friends and supporters when he reached the top of the municipal ladder. He went out of his way to make the humble feel important and had no aspirations to run with the powerful and influential crowd.

No one, but no one, was a bigger booster of St Catharines than Joe McCaffery. His famous references to St Catharines as the capital of everything from rowing to recycling drew roars of approval from any audience, and his friendly, down-to-earth approach melted even the hardest heart and broke the ice in even the most formal setting.

Joe was an Irishman through and through, from his trademark green tie to the green that adorned anything he wore, including the mayor's chain of office.

Joe McCaffery was a great athlete, a fine civic leader, a loyal husband and father, and a remarkable character.

I have lost a good friend. All of St Catharines has lost a good friend. We will miss you, Joe, but we won't forget you.

DAVID REEDY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Last week I rose in this House to honour a citizen in my community who gave of herself in ways that called for recognition in a very special benefit dinner that was held this week, in the person of Doris Silk.

Today I rise to pay homage to another member of our community who has been recognized in his own right, by the organization Community Living Algoma in particular. David Reedy, a member of the board of directors of Community Living Algoma, was honoured with the

James Montgomerie Honour Award in recognition of his active work on behalf of those with developmental or intellectual disabilities in my community. It's the first time somebody from Sault Ste Marie has been honoured in this way.

"Reedy," it says here, "a strong voice for the disabled in our community, first joined Community Living Algoma in 1993, and has served on the board of directors since 1994. In addition to his work with Community Living Algoma, David is a member of the Sault Ste Marie chapter of People First, as well as participating in the Rotary Club and Easter Seal Society fund-raisers. Provincially, he is involved with the People First organization."

My personal experience with David is one of a person keenly interested in the public life of Sault Ste Marie and of this province. David is one to phone me at all times of the day and night when something catches his fancy or he sees something on television, to let me know how he feels and to ask my opinion. Today we say thanks to David.

FRED FLETCHER

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I have the honour today of paying tribute to a man from my riding who made a difference in the lives of others in his community and across the province. Fred Fletcher, who died recently, lived in our area for most of his 84 years. He was very involved in enhancing both the profession in which he worked and the community in which he lived.

Born in Tilbury East township in 1913, Mr Fletcher and his family moved to Chatham in the early 1920s. When the Second World War began, Mr Fletcher enlisted in the navy and served on corvettes. Upon leaving the navy, he joined the Kent and Essex Mutual Fire Insurance Co and eventually became manager of the Chatham branch, retiring in 1978.

Mr Fletcher was very prominent in the insurance industry. He was the founding chairman of the farm mutual reinsurance plan, the first Canadian reinsurance company owned by farm mutuals across Ontario. He was also a founding trustee of the farm mutual guarantee fund, a mechanism through which every farm mutual in Ontario will come to the aid of the policyholders of another company. These two plans are considered the cornerstones of the farm mutual industry. His insight, which led to their establishment, has long been recognized by his peers.

Mr Fletcher was a member of the First Presbyterian Church, serving as treasurer on the board of trustees for years, and he volunteered his time for various church events and faithfully attended services.

I am sure all members join me in offering condolences to his wife, Dora, and his daughter, Joan, his family and his many friends.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): We have a pretty famous corner in my riding. It has been dubbed Killer Corner. The interesting thing about this corner is that we have written and spoken to the minister himself about this intersection for two years now.

Last year we put up flashing lights on one side at Huron Line and Cousineau Road, warning of the impending red light. It's a significant truck route. It leads to the Ambassador Bridge at one end and the 401 at the other. Families have lost people because of this corner. That's why it's called Killer Corner.

We're asking the ministry now to give us a flashing warning light on the other side of the road, given that traffic goes both ways. We don't think it's a huge request. We understand that there are significant, pressing issues facing government today in Ontario. We are looking at a cost of \$20,000, including installation, for flashing warning lights of an impending red light at this corner that impacts families.

There are families who have lost loved ones over the years, and there are school buses that cross with young children, because on either side there are residential areas. We don't think it's a huge request, understanding that there are other pressing areas of government, but we do expect to have a good response from the ministry.

PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I rise today to join with the members for Fort York and Mississauga East who spoke of the importance of recognizing Portugal Day, which is June 10.

Of the 500,000 Portuguese people in Canada, 72% are here in Ontario, and of that, 20,000 are in my community of Hamilton. The Portuguese people have provided incredible input into our community and have been an important part of our culture. In Hamilton we have one of the most diverse communities in all of Canada, and certainly the Portuguese people have played a key leadership role.

The Luso-Canadian Council of Hamilton sponsors Lusofest every year, which is our opportunity to celebrate, through banquets, public displays, dance and song, all of the heritage that the Portuguese people have brought to our community.

In addition, the council sponsors the Lusofest university and college scholarships, where every year they award these scholarships to three of their high school students to promote their education, but also to remind them that it's important to bring their heritage to the fore in our community.

I think the Portuguese people in particular are doing an excellent job in our community of instilling that sense of pride and heritage in the young people so they never forget and always remember: "Be proud to be from Portugal. Be proud to live in Canada." Viva la Portugal.

1340

PHILIPPINES INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): Tomorrow, June 12, marks the 99th anniversary of the proclamation of the independence of the Philippines from Spain.

It was General Emilio Aguinaldo who led the uprising against Spanish colonial rule over the Philippines in the late 19th century that resulted in victory and freedom for his people. Aguinaldo declared June 12 as Philippine Independence Day, but later the American date of July 4 was substituted.

On May 12, 1962, then Philippines President Diosdado Macapagal declared June 12 as the official independence day from then on: "A nation is born into freedom on the day when such a people, moulded into a nation by the process of cultural evolution and a sense of oneness born of common struggle and suffering, announces to the world that it asserts its natural right to liberty and is ready to defend it with blood, life and honour."

Over the weekend I attended a celebration held at the Scarborough Civic Centre by the Federation of Filipino Canadians. I met with federation president Monina Lim Serrano and many other prominent members of the Toronto Filipino community. This well-attended event exhibited a wide array of Filipino song, dance and culture. I look forward to attending their independence day celebration next year and am honoured to have the opportunity to recognize this important event before the Legislature.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to extend my sincerest best wishes and congratulations to all Ontarians of Filipino ancestry on this important day. Mabuhay ang Filipinas.

ASSISTANCE TO FLOOD VICTIMS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I rise today to once again speak about the plight of the flood victims of Essex county. Property damage is now in the millions. Breach walls are failing and are in a state of disrepair. The situation is critical. We are one major storm away from even more damage.

All of this could be rectified today if the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would reinstate funding to the Shoreline Property Assistance Act. The minister has told me on several occasions that his officials are at a meeting and exploring their options. To me this is simply political language for the fact that the minister really doesn't care about the people in Essex and Kent counties. Well, Minister, I do, and I won't stop badgering you about this issue until you do something to provide assistance to the people who have serious breakwall and flood damage.

We're not talking about a handout. It's not a grant, it's a loan, a loan the government will even make some money on. We don't need special legislation. The act is already on the books. With the stroke of a pen, the minister could reinstate funding to the loan program and get the repairs and preventive measures under way.

There is no longer an excuse for inaction by the minister. It's time to clean up the mess on the shoreline of Essex and Kent counties.

PHYSICIANS' FEES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The illegal billing of patients for services covered by OHIP seems to have increased across the province, at least by some doctors. Our office has received several reports of doctors charging user fees, block payments, for services which are already being paid for by OHIP.

One example: I refer to a letter that was sent to a patient which says, "If it is decided that surgery is required to address your complaint, you will be required to pay a surgical administrative fee of \$50 for the procedure." This is purportedly so that the doctor can be paid in connection with the surgery, like arranging hospital beds, operation room time, arranging surgical assistance, consultations, blood work etc. I tell you, Speaker, and you know, that this is thoroughly illegal. We've reported the cases we've been made aware of to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. However, this phenomenon is so pandemic that placing the onus on patients to make a complaint is simply not enough.

Patients who are sick and elderly are afraid to complain in case their surgery is cancelled. Orthopaedic patients who have been waiting many months for surgery are afraid of further delays. There have to be clear and strict sanctions against such illegal billing of our most vulnerable, and penalties levied against physicians who persist in this heinous practice. I call upon the Ministry of Health to be proactive in this matter, not simply sit idle while patients are being gouged.

LOYALIST COLLEGE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to congratulate Loyalist College for continuing to maintain a high level of academic excellence. Not only has Loyalist College been recognized as one of the top facilities in the province, but a recent survey indicated the education received at Loyalist is resulting in meaningful employment opportunities for graduates.

Eighty-nine per cent of the 1996 graduating class recently surveyed found employment within the first six months of graduation. The average annual starting salary for a graduate was close to \$23,000. This means that recent graduates are quickly able to become contributing members of society. Not only are Loyalist graduates finding employment, but in a recent survey of those who employ Loyalist graduates, 99% of the respondents indicated they would hire another Loyalist graduate.

These kinds of results speak volumes for the type of education Loyalist is providing for its students. Students are able to find meaningful employment. Graduates are earning excellent reputations for themselves within the community. As college president Doug Auld said, "These results demonstrate a high degree of accountability to both the employers, graduates and taxpayers of Ontario." I would like to congratulate President Doug Auld and the entire college on these impressive achievements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I rise today on behalf of the government to honour the first Annual Day of Commemoration for Victims of Crime.

This government continues to be whole-heartedly committed to correcting an imbalance that was developed in our justice system where the rights of the accused are put in the spotlight and the needs of victims stay in the shadows. We will not tolerate a system that allows victims of crime to suffer twice: first at the hands of the criminal, and second at the hands of a legal system that does not respect, understand or respond to their needs.

In this government's first year we took immediate steps to introduce a Victims' Bill of Rights which was proclaimed into law one year ago. This legislation, among the most comprehensive in Canada, brings about long-overdue changes to the way victims of crime are treated.

Among its various provisions, the bill of rights enshrines the victims' justice fund to ensure that money collected from fines imposed by the courts on offenders will be used strictly for services to victims. The government allocated more than \$10.2 million from the fund to strengthen victims' services across Ontario over the first two years, and will continue to invest additional funds for victims' services in the future.

We have dedicated funds to double the number of services available to victims of crime as their cases proceed through the courts, and to enhance the services provided in existing sites. Victims in 26 communities will now have the support of the victim/witness assistance program. These programs help people through the court process so they won't be traumatized again. In 1996-97 more than 11,000 victims of crime received these services.

These programs focus on the most vulnerable. More than 80% of the people receiving this support are victims of wife assault, sexual assault or child abuse, while families of homicide victims and families of people killed by impaired drivers make up the remaining individuals who received these services.

The Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services will also be expanding programs which provide immediate on-site services to victims of crime. The victim crisis assistance and referral service will expand to 20 locations with the addition of eight new sites across the province. This further guarantees that services will be available when needed to victims in their own communities.

The government also introduced an information line that will allow victims to get information on the release dates of an offender as well as general information on the criminal justice process at any time. Our government took the steps of establishing domestic violence court projects at Toronto's old city hall and in North York. Launched in cooperation with judges, police, crown attorneys and the victim/witness assistance program, these court projects are designed to do a better job of supporting victims and holding abusers accountable for their crimes.

1350

We are looking for solutions to the problem of domestic violence by trying different approaches. In North York, the focus is on breaking the cycle of violence. In assault cases that do not involve serious injury or use of a weapon, first-time offenders undergo intensive batterers' counselling. The downtown Toronto court focuses on prosecution, employing improved investigation techniques such as the use of 911 tapes to obtain better evidence and improve the chances of obtaining a conviction. Both projects are supported by increased victims' services and are gaining recognition as creative responses to the crime of domestic assault. We are looking to further expand these innovative projects.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of my colleague the minister responsible for women's issues. This minister has shown leadership in coordinating nine ministries in their plans to reduce violence against women. In the last budget, the Ontario women's directorate received an additional \$27 million to deal specifically with violence prevention issues. I know she will have a number of announcements to make in this particular area in the next few weeks.

I take great pride in that Ontario's Victims' Bill of Rights is among the most comprehensive in Canada. However, victims' issues are truly national issues that demand national guidelines that would set standards across the country. I call on the federal government to provide leadership and develop a Canadian victims' bill of rights.

To address the concerns of victims, the federal government must also take action in other areas. Section 745 of the Criminal Code should be repealed outright, because families of murder victims should never be forced to endure the pain of going through a parole application by a convicted killer.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Cam Jackson for his direction in the battle to improve the plight of victims. His work while in opposition has been a valuable foundation for our efforts as a government.

This government will not stop here. We will continue to expand victims' services, to seek policy solutions and to make the real changes necessary to ensure the rights of victims are protected in Ontario's justice system.

Today, Ontario's Annual Day of Commemoration for Victims of Crime, I ask all members of the House to join in reaffirming the commitment to rebalance the scales of justice through further action to meet the needs and respect the rights of victims of crime.

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): It's with a great sense of sobriety that I rise to respond to the Attorney General's statement this morning. It's important for all of us to acknowledge the suffering of victims of crime in our community, but more important, I think it's important for all of us to commit even more fully to pledging that they will not suffer further at the hands of a justice system which is often insensitive to their needs.

At the press conference this morning, the government released yet another 1-800 number for victims of crime. Let me tell the Attorney General that victims of crime do not need another 1-800 hotline to nowhere. What they need is for us to stop talking and to start doing.

Despite what the government may have said and what it wants us to believe, there's much to be concerned about. There is, for instance, the very large cut that has been made to the Ministry of the Attorney General, which has made the delivery of the system of justice in this province much more difficult. Nowhere is this truer than in the courts. We have fewer crown attorneys to deal with ever more complex cases. We have persistent case backlogs plaguing our courthouses across the province. The Attorney General pops up now and then to announce a new blitz, and yet they don't seem to have worked. What we need is leadership every day of the year to address the very serious problem of backlogs.

It should not take unprecedented interventions by the chief justices of this province before the Attorney General will notice that court backlogs are a major problem for victims. We've had examples of cases of theft, holdup, sexual assaults, all dismissed because it took too long to get them to prosecution. No assurances have been given by this government of how to solve this problem. Delays threaten more than 50% of criminal trials in Ontario with the same fate. Is it any wonder that Chief Justice McMurtry, himself once an Attorney General and a member of a previous Conservative government, has said, "Liability service is paid within the ranks of the government to the importance of the justice system"? A very damning comment indeed. I and all Ontarians hope that today is not more lip-service.

I remind the Attorney General that victims have a right to justice and that justice delayed is justice denied. Victims also want information, and information denied is justice denied. My private member's bill dedicated to victims' rights sought to ensure that victims would be kept informed by crown attorneys of every step of the proceedings in criminal cases.

In particular, I have spoken many times in this House about the need for clear guidelines for plea bargains, so that prosecutors will not make the kind of deal with the devil that we saw in the Karla Homolka case. Some 300,000 people signed a petition agreeing with me, and yet nothing was done. Over and over again, the Attorney General has promised such guidelines would come. I must surely be embarrassed that despite such statements ever since March 1996, and we're talking now of well over a year, his government has done nothing.

In February of this year I raised another case, that of Karen Vanscoy, whose daughter was shot to death. Again, a plea-bargain deal was entered into without adequate consultation with the family, and an offender who should have been charged with second-degree murder got away with a light sentence of manslaughter. It's a sobering thought that the Attorney General and his ministry have learned nothing.

I say to the minister that his success or failure as Attorney General will depend substantially upon his ability to give victims of crime the humane face of our justice system instead of the bewildering maze and delays they now have to encounter. As we reflect upon victims of crime, let us hope that your efforts in the future will be better than your record in the past.

Let me conclude with the words of the Attorney General himself in this House in November 1995: "The

government will not accept a system that allows victims of crime to suffer twice: first at the hands of the criminal and, second, under a justice system that does not respond to and respect victims' needs." I challenge the Attorney General and his government to give meaning to those words.

We respect this day, we respect that it has been set aside for victims, but we urge the government once again to stop talking and start acting.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): First, on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus, let me make it clear that we will continue to support in the future, as we have in the past, any and all efforts to improve justice for victims. However, having said that, I find the words of the Attorney General today particularly disappointing and frustrating, as I'm sure do the Vanscoy family in St Catharines, whose daughter was murdered with a stolen handgun, and where, notwithstanding the interventions of Jim Bradley, MPP for St Catharines, and myself by way of questions to the Attorney General in this House, the charge of murder was plea-bargained away with respect to both a lesser offence and a reduced penalty.

The words are of little comfort to Linda Evans from Welland who narrowly, only by the grace of God, escaped death after being stabbed over 30 times and who was ignored in the process of plea-bargaining away the charge of attempted murder against her attacker with an agreed-upon sentence. It's of little comfort to the Taylor family of St Catharines whose case Jim Bradley has pleaded in this Legislature and who remain frustrated by there being no recognition of their rights, notwithstanding Mr Harnick's Victims' Bill of Rights. It's of little comfort to the thousands of petitioners who, in response to the tragic murder of Theresa Vince in Chatham, have petitioned this government to establish a joint provincial-municipal committee to examine sexual harassment.

This Attorney General is Harnicking us again when he speaks of justice for victims yet advocates increasing numbers and levels of diversion programs for increasingly serious crimes as a response to his underfunding and abandonment of our criminal justice system. Crown attorneys are fewer and fewer in number, increasingly contract crown attorneys, coping with larger and larger caseloads. The pressure on crown attorneys to plea-bargain by this government has increased phenomenally. Crown attorneys face quota systems for guilty pleas, which inevitably leads to the reduction of charges and agreement for sentences well below the appropriate range for offenders.

This Attorney General, speaking of the Victims' Bill of Rights, speaks as he has throughout his career. When you contrast his statement today with the increasing defunding of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, one of the vehicles through which and by which innocent victims can receive compensation for the incredible duress they undergo, I'm afraid this government talks a big game when it comes to justice for victims, will do a great press conference, but simply doesn't deliver. The people out there know it full well and all too painfully.

1400

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): As my colleague said, I will be supporting this. I think it's a good step forward. However, in particular in response to the

minister's comments about the minister responsible for women's issues — he says she's shown leadership — I want to remind people that the minister responsible for women's issues has done just the opposite.

I'd like to take this opportunity to ask the minister responsible for women's issues to today announce that second-stage housing will be put back in place and second-stage housing opened. When we talk about women who are victims of violence and their children, when they escape from those abusive situations we all know and studies show that one of the key, most important aspects for their recovery and their ability to get back into the flow of life is that they often need proper counselling for themselves and their kids, and they need a safe place. I'm not talking about first-stage emergency housing but transition housing. That is gone, and that is a crime.

I also want to remind the minister today that we still have not had a response from her, which I believe she promised to have given by now, on the infamous McGuire report, which suggested, we will all remember, that women only be allowed to stay in emergency shelters for 24 to 48 hours and then have neighbours call if they see any problems after they go back home. We have still not heard from this minister or from this government their response to that report. I ask the minister to take a good close look at all the cuts they've already made and the pittance —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): There are a couple of groups in our gallery today. I would like to introduce Colonel Robert Hardie, the former chief aide-de-camp to a number of Lieutenant Governors. Welcome.

I would also like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today members of the parliamentary delegation from the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, comprising Mr Roger Fitzgerald, Mr Anthony Sparrow and Mr Rick Woodford. Please join me in welcoming our guests as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PHYSICIANS' FEES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a question for the Premier. Over the last couple of months I have raised some issues with your Minister of Health and with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario with respect to the question of doctors billing for services that are covered under the OHIP fee schedule, such as a case involving a senior citizen who was forced to pay a \$50 fee to book an operating room. The College of Physicians and Surgeons has acknowledged that they are aware that a number of physicians, particularly specialists and surgical subspecialists, have been charging separately for various components of the insured service they're providing to patients as though these components were uninsured services.

Premier, these extra costs affect the poor, the elderly and those who are least able to cope with them. What does your government intend to do about this situation?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): To immediately ask the Minister of Health to respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): As the honourable member is aware, both the Ontario Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons are doing their utmost right now to make sure that doctors know where the line is and that they understand what is included in the payments they receive from OHIP; and that if they're already paid for a service and it's a medically insured service, the Canada Health Act does not allow extra-billing, nor do the laws of this province.

I would say to the honourable member that we have a very good system in place. Every complaint is followed up by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is the quasi-judicial board, and its Medical Review Committee. I encourage all members, as the honourable member has done the right thing, to bring those cases directly to the attention of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who will investigate the cases and provide appropriate remedies.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): That's the kind of answer we're getting used to hearing from the virtual Minister of Health. He keeps bobbing off in every which direction. We have people like Mr Judd, who now has to pay \$10 every time he gets a prescription renewed over the phone. He's disabled. Every time his child, who is disabled, has to not go to school, he has to pay another \$10 for a school note. Those are fees which have been entrenched. Now we have seniors who can't go to surgeons, who are getting charged \$50 and \$75 block fees for services that are supposed to be covered by OHIP even though they say right on the paper that these are services not covered.

You need to take responsibility because the physicians are telling us this is coming from your climate that you've created for doctors, that you've created the need, the necessity for them to go and have off different types of services and then charge the public for them. You're bringing us down the road to two-tier health. Tell us now that you're prepared to act to make sure this practice doesn't become more widespread and that the college has everything it needs to deal with this.

Hon Mr Wilson: The college does have everything it needs to deal with it. I don't think the honourable member is suggesting we should in any way interfere with the regulation model that's been set up, which is being studied around the world and adopted by governments of all stripes — and kudos to the NDP government for bringing in the self-governing model which works very effectively.

Each and every one of these cases is taken very seriously by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is made up of laypeople and physicians.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You take them seriously —

Hon Mr Wilson: I take the cases extremely seriously, and it is the appropriate course of action, as under the law, to refer those cases out of the hands of the politicians and into the hands of the investigators. That's what's done, and I encourage members to continue to be

diligent and to act on behalf of their constituents, as the honourable member from Windsor has done.

Mr Duncan: It's very interesting, because obviously you and the college are not communicating. I'd like to read you a letter I received from the college which says "The college is currently referring any such matters that come to its attention to the provider services branch of the Ministry of Health." So we have the Minister of Health on the one hand who is saying that the college is doing it; we have the college on the other hand that's saying the minister should be doing it. The problem is that we've got people like Mr Carter, my constituent, who had to pay \$50 and, irony of ironies, ultimately it was the Workers' Compensation Board that picked up the cost.

When will you take responsibility to ensure that we continue to have free, accessible public health in this province? Quit passing it off to the college and start dealing with it, and at least get your story straight so that the people of the province, the poor, the elderly, those who can least afford to pay it, have access to a full range of services right across Ontario.

Hon Mr Wilson: The letter the honourable member is referring to is contained in the recent edition of Dialogue magazine, which goes out to all physicians in the province. It is a letter of the former registrar of the college, Dr Dickson. If he would read the whole letter in, he would give the whole picture to the province.

The college deals the disciplinary matters and quasi-judicial processes involved. The reason they refer back to us is that we reimburse patients once the college has made a determination, so we send a cheque to the patients. If they've been ripped off by \$50 or something, then they're reimbursed. Then, if that doesn't alleviate the situation, the college also institutes disciplinary action if they deem it appropriate once due process has been followed through the Medical Review Committee and other procedures that the college follows. I think it's a very good system. The college acts like a court of law and also acts as the disciplinary body. I don't think he's suggesting that politicians should become the court of law and the disciplinary body.

1410

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Environment. Yesterday, when discussing the issue of the massive dumping into Lake Ontario by Ontario Hydro of 1.8 million pounds of copper and 800,000 pounds of zinc, you went on to dismiss this, basically trivializing it. Afterwards you compared, in media reports, the amount that is found in water to taking a vitamin pill. You have said it takes 150 litres of water with zinc and copper in it to make up what is really one vitamin pill. You have dismissed the concern. You said the water is safe, that this has absolutely no impact on water and no impact on our environment.

Minister, I hope you stand by your word. I would ask you and challenge you to stand by what you said. This is a container of water from Lake Ontario. I dare you: Will you drink from this water today to prove that what you have said is correct?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I indicated yesterday that this is a very serious matter, that we are looking into it in accordance with the law and the processes that are put forward with regard to the Environmental Bill of Rights and that we will get to the bottom of it. But that will take some time as it's a very complex and complicated matter, and we intend to do it in the proper fashion, in a fashion that is consistent.

With regard to the trivialization of this, I responded to a question by a reporter who wanted to compare the effluent with what might be contained in a vitamin tablet which can be purchased at any pharmacy, so I responded —

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): You fell for it.

Hon Mr Sterling: No, I responded to the question. It was not raised by me; it was raised by a reporter and I responded to it. It had nothing to do with trivializing the issue.

Mr Agostino: From your answer in the House yesterday, where you compared this massive dumping into Lake Ontario to copper pipes in a home, when you said first 150 and then your spokesperson said, "Oh, it's only 120 litres of water that will equal one multivitamin pill," it's very clear that you do not believe it has detrimental health effects.

We received information this morning from Cornell University, Michigan State University, University of Oregon and the University of California at Davis. In all these cases the information received is that copper, similar to mercury and lead, is bioaccumulative. It means that over a period of time the human body will suffer. It means scientists we spoke to at these universities clearly agree that a long-term impact of these chemicals in the human body causes health effects such as nausea, shock, weak heart rates, brain damage and in some cases death. It's very clear there's a danger here.

Minister, will you today do the right and honourable thing and authorize a third-party independent review of the coverup that has gone on at Ontario Hydro in the dumping of this into Lake Ontario?

Hon Mr Sterling: I want to make it absolutely clear that copper in the concentrations we are talking about here are not bioaccumulative. That has been confirmed by scientists at the Ministry of Environment, and to say anything other than that is really just misrepresenting the true facts of the situation. We are not talking about mercury here, we are not talking about lead here; I understand, from the questions and the thrust of the questions here, we've been talking about copper and zinc.

We are going through the proper processes to determine whether or not there are grounds for an investigation as per the Environmental Bill of Rights. We intend to follow the process. We are concerned about the dumping of these particular minerals in Lake Ontario and intend to get to the bottom of it.

Mr Agostino: It's very clear that this minister has no plans whatsoever to launch an independent third-party investigation into the coverup that has occurred at Ontario Hydro. That is wrong. That is unacceptable to the people of Ontario. Minister, you don't seem to understand there's a problem here. There's a problem with a corporation that reports to you as minister. You are responsible

for Ontario Hydro. This corporation over the years has been involved in a massive coverup, in illegal dumping into our lakes in this province.

It's unacceptable for them to investigate themselves. Would you allow a private company that has spilled tonnes of chemicals into Lake Ontario to go ahead and investigate themselves and report to you at a later date? Absolutely not. It is unacceptable, Minister. You have a responsibility here and you simply have a conflict. You have to ensure that there's an arm's-length mechanism here to review what has happened. Otherwise, the message to corporations in Ontario is that it's okay, Ontario Hydro can do it. The minister will just nod and wink and turn a blind eye to it.

Minister, if you don't agree to an independent third-party review, then you are part of this coverup that has occurred at Ontario Hydro. I ask you again, restore the confidence in your ministry, do the honourable thing and please today launch an independent third-party review.

Hon Mr Sterling: The process that is outlined under the Environmental Bill of Rights requires that the Ministry of Environment act on its own through my officials, through some of the directors and the assistant directors who are responsible for these matters. They make the decision on the basis of the information they have before them as to whether an investigation should go forward.

It is clearly outlined in the Environmental Bill of Rights that when this is brought to the attention of the Environmental Commissioner and then to the ministry there is a time frame for that to happen. We will fully comply with those provisions, go through the process, make those decisions in accordance with the facts presented to us and launch an investigation if the facts prove that to be that case and the directors make that decision.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question for the Premier. Last August your government closed eight offices of the family support plan and laid off 290 experienced staff. As a result, thousands and thousands of women and children who used to receive regular support payments did not receive these and suffered serious financial loss as a consequence.

Day after day last fall in this House we raised case after case of women and children who were suffering and we told this government that this situation was a crisis. Every time we raised a question and a case, your Attorney General said there wasn't a problem, told us things were getting better, tried to blame other governments, employers, payors and everyone else he could find with respect to the matter.

But yesterday the Ombudsman said in her report the following, and I quote, "The manner in which the transition was carried out by the family support plan caused hardship for individuals whom the plan was designed to benefit." Premier, are you finally prepared to admit that your government was wrong when you decided to finance your phoney tax cut off the backs of these women and children?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Of course the tax cut has given us more jobs and revenue, so we would have more dollars to provide services to the people of Ontario. This is now being widely acknowledged

throughout the province. So the premise, I guess, of the motive of the question is absolutely ludicrous.

Second, I think we have indicated all along that while the plan was an absolute unmitigated disaster that we inherited and the plan we are putting in place is in fact already better but still not perfect and will be even better in the future, we wished that the transition from disaster that we inherited from you to a better plan could have been done more smoothly. I think so does the Ombudsman and so do we.

1420

Ms Martel: Premier, I know where the Attorney General gets his lesson from. You are just as bad as he is in trying to blame everyone else for what happened at the family support plan. The fact of the matter is, Mr Premier, your Attorney General decided to cut the budget of the family support plan by 35% over two years as part of the savings he was trying to find for your tax cut. That's the reality. You can't blame that on anyone else.

The report that was put forward by the Ombudsman yesterday was damning in its indictment of your government and how this transition was handled. She made it perfectly clear that thousands and thousands of women and children and families were victimized by your government because of the bungling of the transition on the part of your Attorney General. There was no excuse for what happened. He knew this would be the consequence and the result for thousands and thousands of families, yet your Attorney General proceeded anyway to victimize these people further.

When, Premier, are you going to accept some responsibility for the victimization of women and children who depend on support payments —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: As soon as we took office we accepted responsibility for fixing one of the worst-run programs in the history of this government. We brought in legislative changes; we brought in a number of amendments; we brought in probably the toughest policy that exists in Canada to try and provide support for those who are owed funds as a result of what is regrettably lack of support from one spouse or the other to children.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mr Harris: We have indicated that the transition to the centralized, far more efficient and what will be a far more effective program took longer and didn't go as smoothly as we would have liked. But the fundamental principle that the program was a disgrace —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Premier, I don't think you understand what your government's attack on the family support plan did to women and their kids. Eviction notices were served; mortgages were foreclosed on; utility bills went unpaid and water and gas and electricity were turned off; phone bills went unpaid; and people had to line up at barren food banks for food because the moneys that were being paid by their supporting spouses weren't being delivered to them.

You hurt women and kids, and the Ombudsman's report is very clear that it was your dismantling of eight regional offices, your termination of almost 300 staff,

your defunding of the family support plan by 35% that caused that victimization and hardship. When will somebody in your government finally accept their ministerial responsibility and go beyond merely saying, "I'm sorry," to accept responsibility for the victimization of these women and kids and resign?

Hon Mr Harris: I suppose when we took office we could have left the failed program in place and pointed the finger at you for the term of our mandate, but we opted instead to take a disgraceful disaster of a program — well-intentioned, we acknowledge — and try and correct it.

We brought in opting out for those who agree, something that both sides had lobbied for. We brought in driver's licence suspension, we brought in credit bureau reporting and we undertook to take a program and had the courage to go in and say: "This has failed. It's not working. Everybody knows it's not working. It will be difficult, but it is something we must tackle and try and make better in the long term."

Let me agree with those in the program, with those in opposition and with the Ombudsman that we all wished we could have fixed the disgrace more quickly, but we are determined to have a better program in the end.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I want to warn the members for Riverdale, London Centre, Sudbury East and Welland-Thorold to come to order, please. It's a warning. I'm not going to warn you again.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday the report of the Ombudsman contained within it scathing evidence regarding your government's incompetence in implementing your own agenda. In reporting on the problems which your Attorney General caused in the family support plan, the Ombudsman confirms our concern that real people are being badly hurt by incompetent implementation of massive change, and she warned that similar chaos could result in other areas of radical change, in hospital restructuring, for example.

The Attorney General said yesterday, "One of those significant recommendations for me was to convey to my colleagues some of the problems we had." Minister, can you tell us today what advice the Attorney General has given you that you can apply to hospital restructuring?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The Attorney General and I chat regularly. I read the Ombudsman's report, and I didn't see anything wrong with the Ministry of Health in it, so I don't understand your question.

Mrs Boyd: It's quite clear you don't understand the concern people all over this province have about the incompetence of your government in managing massive change. That's the issue.

In Thunder Bay, for example, your restructuring commission has already delivered its decisions. The Thunder Bay Regional Hospital has bed targets it must meet. In Thunder Bay you've reduced the transfer to the hospitals, and in Thunder Bay you announced restructuring money and home care money. Why, then, is there a critical bed shortage?

As reported in the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal on Saturday, there are people waiting in emergency rooms for as long as two days because all the acute care beds are full. As a result, waiting lists for surgery are growing and the hospital cannot open any more beds because they're bound by the restructuring commission orders. This is the same kind of problem that the Ombudsman warned would happen in areas like hospital restructuring.

Minister, can you explain to us why the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital has been forced to close beds, putting patients in danger, when the alternatives are not yet in place?

Hon Mr Wilson: In the same article, the administrator points out that patient care has not been adversely affected. They're going through transition there. The government has put forward \$59 million, unprecedented amounts, to go through that restructuring. The fact is that the article points out that when the 54 transitional beds are put in place at St Joe's, the problem will be relieved. Right now the hospital corporation is exercising flexibility to make sure people have beds. That is to be, quite fairly, expected in any transitional period.

A plan is in place, and the experts are just defining the final definition of what "transitional beds" are. That's an exciting thing for northern Ontario, to have transitional beds, which means that rather than sending people home early, as under your two governments, people will now be able to stay in a lower-cost bed —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: — not as expensive as an acute care hospital bed but a higher-cost bed than a nursing home bed. That's a new area of health care in Ontario's —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs Boyd: That may excite you and it may excite the administrators at the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, but I can tell you that the feelings of the patients lying in those emergency rooms and their families are quite different. They're not excited; they're fearful. Yes, all of us can see that this vision may eventually give better care. What about the people who are suffering in the meantime?

You are standing in your place and making the same kinds of excuses the Attorney General made about women and kids who are going hungry because of his incompetence. Don't fall into the same trap. You know very well that the CAC is not yet operational. You know very well that the \$2.4 million you've announced for home care hasn't materialized. You know that the transitional beds aren't ready because the capital plan has lagged way behind. Those people who are occupying those beds have nowhere to go because those transitional beds aren't in place. When are you going to accept your responsibility to be out making sure that people are not suffering now because of your vision of a distant future?

Hon Mr Wilson: The government's responsibility was to provide the dollars and the leadership. Back in March, on March 3 to be exact, I announced \$7.67 million of new money for health care in Thunder Bay to increase community services. There is not one reason today, except for a shortage of professionals, that community services there haven't increased dramatically. The money is there. We pay those invoices every 30 days, depending on the service they provide, and they have a licence now

to provide hundreds more hours of nursing in the community than they had when you were in office or when the Liberals were in office.

Also I would point to the fact that there is a plan in place, transitional beds will come on line, and the hospitals should be commended for doing —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): When?

Hon Mr Wilson: Well, by December 2 they expect to have the beds in place. The beds have to be built. St. Joe's, which hasn't undergone renovations in years, is going to undergo renovations and is going to be an absolutely world-class health care system in Thunder Bay. The local community should be congratulated for making the transition —

The Speaker: Thank you Minister. New question.

1430

ADULT EDUCATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the Minister of Education. Over 1,000 adult education students are circling the Legislature right now. They're joining hands as a link for their continued education, which is being threatened by your education policy that discriminates against students over 21 years of age. Their circle symbolizes the unity of adult education students as they fight to maintain current funding levels for all high school students regardless of age.

One of the students who came out today and spoke outside is Elaine Lloyd-Robinson. She spoke for all the students when she said how much completing her secondary education meant to her, how it will open doors for her and how it will help her break into the job market with skills she learned at the Scarborough Centre for Alternative Studies. Elaine spoke on behalf of all the adult students, including Kim Briggs-Hartneal and Emma Gordon-Reynolds from Scarborough and Terrie Leah-Toner from East York, who attended today.

Elaine and over 1,000 students are here today, Minister, trying again to get your attention, and they're saying, don't cut their day school education. Will you listen to them?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the member for Scarborough North for the question. It's an opportunity to make sure people understand that the province continues to provide funding for adult education right across the province and that adult education programs continue to be offered by schools right across the province and we have no intention of changing that.

In fact we proposed a special section for funding for adult education in our new allocation model particularly to meet the needs of adult students. We understand that training and education programs for adults are important, not just for the individuals, but for the future of this province. We believe there is no one system of providing that training and that education for adults that will perfectly meet the individual circumstances of all those different people.

That's why we have continued to support a variety of programs, including those in school, but also the Independent Learning Centre, which allows adult students to learn on their own course, the college upgrading courses

provided across the province, a whole variety of training programs, and why I and my colleagues are proud of —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. Supplementary.

Mr Curling: If you take your head out of the book, you will realize you've cut the funding for them, Minister. Once again, you're taking money out of the classroom to fund your tax cut, and you know it, at the cost of adult students who will not have the essential training they need to find jobs.

These programs are jeopardizing their opportunity to do something about what they want to do. You committed in your pre-election platform, if you recall, and I quote: "Not enough is being invested in students directly. Classroom-based budgeting will help ensure that this essential service is protected and indeed that excellence in education and training is enhanced."

You have cut that, and they have told you over and over. You've shifted around and danced around, and the bottom line is that you have cut funding from adult education and are treating these people as second-class citizens. Take your head out of the book and deal with the issue at hand. Will you listen to that, Minister, and do something about it?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The member for Scarborough North can try to paint this any way he wants, but the truth and the fact remain that this province is committed to adult education and training programs and we continue to fund those programs across the province. As a matter of fact, this government, my colleagues and I, do not believe that those education and training programs should be supplied through any one delivery system. Adults should have a variety of options that meet their circumstances.

We particularly believe that adults should not have to conform to programs that were designed for adolescents. We believe that the needs of adults are individual, that they're unique and that we must continue to improve our training and education system to meet those individual needs.

I remind the member for Scarborough North that in my own family, my father participated in those programs for adult education. My father was called to the bar late in life and I at least among my colleagues understand the need for adult education and have some compassion for the people who are in that system.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): My question is for the Chair of Management Board, who is the minister responsible for the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Your government has already been publicly chastised for its incompetence in managing and protecting confidential government files. After all this, can you explain to us why confidential government records continue to be left to languish in the hallways of office towers, left there unattended, unsealed, unsecured and accessible to any passerby?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): If the member opposite has any particular information, any particular location of any particular confidential informa-

tion, I would be pleased to receive that information and to look into it and to get him an answer.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.
Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): After receiving a call from a concerned citizen of the public, my colleague from Welland-Thorold and I visited a downtown Toronto office tower this morning where we found stacks of boxes lining the hallways which contained confidential government and personnel documents with SIN numbers. We understand that the boxes have been left there unattended, unsecured, unsealed, for over two months now. If you want to get a full briefing, you can come to our press conference at 3:30 and see a copy of the video.

I say to the minister that it is clear from the second incident that the government has failed to learn any lesson as a consequence of the bungling of the family support plan transition. In fact, the government continues to slash and burn government services, forgetting that government itself has some responsibilities; in this case, the responsibility to protect personnel and government records and files. Your cuts are having a serious impact on how government operates.

The Speaker: Question please.

Ms Martel: Are you prepared to admit today that your cuts have been so deep that your government is incapable now of carrying out its responsibilities, like protecting —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Sudbury East.

Hon David Johnson: Far from the truth. This government, in a systematic, businesslike way, through business plans — for the first time ever in the history of the province we have introduced business plans to restructure the government in a systematic way, to tackle the expenditures that have been rung up by the previous two governments. As a result, we now have reduced the deficit considerably. We are on track to eliminating the deficit. We are on track to start paying down that debt by the end of this term of government. This is what the people of Ontario have been asking for for years and years.

I am unaware of any particular confidential information that is getting out into hands, that is being misused. If the members opposite have a specific address, specific information, again, let me know about it and I'll be delighted to look into it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. As you know, this spring seniors in my riding of Simcoe East expressed to me their concern about the annual deductible for the Ontario drug benefit plan. Despite a sincere effort at communicating the dates of the annual benefit coverage, the information remained unclear and confusing to many seniors. I know they were pleased to hear yesterday of the government's decision to extend the benefit year for coverage under the plan. Could the minister inform the House how our seniors' input affected this decision and explain why the new date of August 1, 1999, was chosen?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): I want to thank my colleague from Simcoe East for raising the concerns, as he does frequently, on behalf of the seniors in his riding.

Over the course of the last eight months, our government has undertaken a round table of discussions with seniors' organizations all across the province. In fact, on April 8 six organizations met directly with the Treasurer to discuss issues in preparation for our budget, of which the drug plan was one.

Seniors' groups clearly indicated their two primary concerns: First, knowing we had the lowest copayments in Canada, they didn't want them increased; and second, after years of having drugs held off the market in this province, they wanted to thank the government for increasing the number of drugs to 465 new drugs in the last two years, making Ontario the most comprehensive drug benefit plan in North America at the lowest cost.

I remind members that 1.5 million Ontario residents pay \$2 for their drugs in this province, the lowest anywhere in North America.

1440

Mr McLean: Since there has been so much confusion regarding the original benefit year, I'm wondering if the minister could take the opportunity to clarify for the House the implications for constituents who may be celebrating their 65th birthday soon and will be entering the insurance plan for the first time. Explain to me how they will do that.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to make it clear that the government communicated a year and a half ago that the anniversary date was April 1. We can clearly demonstrate that we told the media, we talked to every member of this House in communications, we talked to every pharmacist in this province. But we're the first to admit that we could have done a better job communicating that to seniors and we appreciate that seniors have provided us with that input.

The date of August 1, 1998, has been chosen because it will give full coverage for seniors in this province for 16 full months. We believe that is fair and reasonable with respect to the support for this program.

As it relates to seniors who are turning 65, we have offered this additional benefit to seniors. If a senior turns 65 in February, for example, they will be prorated and therefore they would only pay \$50 for their insurance deductible and not the full \$100.

I remind members opposite that these —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Jackson: I'm working on that, Mr Speaker.

With the lowest-cost drug plan in Canada, we're very pleased that we have been able to respond to the seniors of Ontario, but be mindful that August 1, 1998, is the next anniversary.

The Speaker: Minister, I know you've been working on it, but you get a minute and 10. You've been working on that answer for a couple of days, actually.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, you've had a controversial and disturbing report sitting on your desk now since December 17. The report has become known as the McGuire report. It's the one that recommends, among many other things, that women be forced to leave emergency shelters within 48 hours.

The recommendations in this report have caused a great deal of anxiety, and that anxiety has been heightened by the fact that you have so far refused to distance yourself from the report and because you have delayed so long in responding to it. You promised a response fully two months ago.

Minister, will you tell women today that you have indeed torn up the McGuire report and will you assure them that any changes in programs and funding that you are making are not in the direction of the proposals of that report?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): I would like to advise my colleague and critic that we have been working very hard on the responses to the McGuire report, to come to better solutions in responding to the needs of families across this province.

We are extremely excited about making a major response, including some 27 million new dollars to be spent over four years to deal with issues that affect the quality of women's lives around violence. We are absolutely committed to ending violence in Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, you're the one who commissioned the report. It is an alarming report. It needs to be torn up. I guess the fact that you have not distanced yourself from it yet again today makes us very concerned that the real goal of the McGuire report and your real goal, the goal of your government in commissioning it, was to find efficiencies in the programs that deal with violence against women; that the real goal is to find ways of cutting dollars. That's why that report recommends that you shift dollars away from programs that provide protection for women to what you call prevention and it is why you yourself have misrepresented the importance of shelters in providing protection.

You said recently that you've eliminated administrative waste that drains our resources. You've cut funding for shelters, you've cut funding for counselling and second-stage housing, you've proposed shifting resources away from more places that offer protection to women who need support and protection. I ask you whether or not that is your idea of administrative waste and if that's where we're going to see more cuts in the future.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Before she answers the question, I want to say that you must withdraw the fact that you charge the minister with misrepresenting. That's not parliamentary.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I will certainly indicate that the minister has made it clear that she sees a different role for shelters than those that shelters —

The Speaker: You don't have to clarify; you just have to withdraw.

Mrs McLeod: I'll withdraw the word "misrepresent."

Hon Mrs Cunningham: On the last note with regard to shelters, shelters have been the foundation and the core and the very beginning of extremely important services to protect women who have been the victims of violence, and they will remain so. They actually have been working with us to enhance the role of all agencies across Ontario.

It really is very tiresome to get this kind of information from two governments that did nothing to make sure that programs worked, did nothing to know whether there was waste and duplication, did not focus on the wide range of

services across nine ministries and 30 programs that we are doing. We continue to get good advice and good information.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): You shouldn't make things up to get off the hook.

The Speaker: That's unparliamentary. You can't charge a minister with making things up.

Ms Churley: I withdraw that I charged the minister with making things up. I withdraw it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: People who are tremendously involved in finding solutions and helping us come back with a major response for programs and prevention of violence against women —

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: — would not make those kind of accusations. We do not have that kind of commitment from that member.

I will go on to say that just in today's —

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ADULT EDUCATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. The minister talks a lot about equity in funding in the education system, but he will know that he has left out of that a large number of students, thousands of students in this province, about a thousand of whom have circled the building here today.

The cutbacks the minister has made in transfer payments to boards and in adult education have led to the decimation of adult education programs in the province. Now that the province is taking over control of education funding, 12,000 students attending adult education day schools risk the loss of their schools and their courses, their education. Will the minister reconsider his position and extend equitable funding to adult day school programs in this province?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): To the member for Algoma, I believe that if you look at what's going on in Ontario now, if you have a look at what's happening in terms of training for adults, of education for adults, you'll see a dramatic improvement in the services available for adults now versus two years ago. Included in that is that for the first time Ontario has a full GED program available for adult learners. It recognizes the fact that people learn in classrooms but they also learn in life. This is a program that recognizes the learning that adults may have had in their business or other circumstances and allows them to get a high school equivalency. This GED program is available in nine other provinces and 50 states but was not available in Ontario until we took office. It now is available to adult learners right across the province. I and my colleagues are proud of that.

Mr Wildman: The minister's response doesn't take into account the dramatic drop in the registration of adults in adult education programs in the province. The fact is that this government says it wants people who are not now able to be productive and contribute to society, to provide for themselves and their families, to get the skills they require. Many of those students don't just require a course; they require supports that are only

available in a day school program, that are not available in the continuing education program. How does the minister expect these students to get the kinds of supports they require in a continuing education program, and if he does think they can do that, can he explain to us now how it's going to be provided?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I find it hard to imagine that the member for Algoma doesn't understand that there's a difference between the services and supports and programs that are appropriate for adolescents, and the programs and supports that are necessary for adults who would like to get the accreditation. It's a very different set of circumstances.

Just to point out to the member opposite, not only are the continuing education programs available for adults through our school system, and they continue to be available for adults through our school system, we also have the Independent Learning Centre, which provides individually tailored, learn-at-home programs for adults right across the province. We have college upgrading courses available in our community colleges across the province. We have a whole host and variety of training programs and we are now looking at making improvements to those training programs and the GED program, the high school equivalency program I just mentioned. There is a vast array of programs available for adults so they can become more productive members of our society and can get that individual satisfaction from completing their education.

1450

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It concerns the number of people both from inside the riding of Etobicoke-Rexdale and from without who are thinking of running in the upcoming elections in the new unified city of Toronto.

What they would like to know is how the municipal affairs ministry will deal with the question of political contributions or tax credits, because Metropolitan Toronto in the past, for candidates for those positions, has offered tax credits to donors, and I believe the same for the city of Toronto, yet other parts of Metropolitan Toronto such as Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough have not. The same with the Hydro commissions.

What these folks would like to know is, how will the ministry handle this situation so we'll have a balanced and even playing field for all potential and registered candidates in the upcoming election.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale for the question. This is an issue that is of interest to his constituents and, as a matter of fact, of interest to people right across Ontario.

We have been asked by numerous people from around the province to establish a rebate system for citizens contributing to municipal election campaigns very similar to what we have for provincial and federal campaigns. As a result, on May 12 of this year we filed a regulation which will allow a rebating system for municipal candidates as long as all the proper procedures are followed.

We know this process will assist and benefit citizens from Ontario who want to contribute to municipal campaigns.

Mr Hastings: In other words, then, the application of the new arrangement will affect all candidates who are registered in the upcoming election, not only for the new unified city of Toronto but right across the province, and they will not have to create their own separate individual bylaw respective of each municipality.

Hon Mr Leach: The rebate system we propose is very similar to what now exists in the province and with the federal government. If a contribution is \$100 or less, the rebate is 75% of the contribution, and if a contribution is more than \$100 but not more than \$400, the rebate is 75% plus 50% of the difference between the contribution and \$100. To provide a practical example, if an individual contributes \$300 to a campaign, their rebate would be \$175. However, it is very important to remind the House that there are financial forms and receipts that all campaigns will have to fill out to make sure the rebates can be given back to the parties.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Construction workers and contractors in Hawkesbury, Cornwall, Maxville, Ottawa, Pembroke, Windsor and all across Ontario are still losing their jobs because of your government's inability to resolve the labour mobility issue with Quebec.

It is obvious that we have many cases to prove it. The new agreement with Quebec does nothing for our construction workers. Last week a construction site in Montreal was completely shut down because, of the 50 workers, four were from Ontario. On the Perley Bridge in Hawkesbury, only 5% of the workforce on the site are from Ontario and the rest are from Quebec. My question is, do Ontario workers have to do like Quebecers and shut down the Perley Bridge site, or will your government take action to secure jobs for Ontarians?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Contrary to the information you are presenting, there is certainly some gain taking place and our people are having access to Quebec, which they have never, ever had before. Obviously, there are people on both sides of the border who still continue to become upset and there will continue to be some disputes, but I would indicate to you that we have made progress beyond what has happened anywhere else in Canada. We negotiated an agreement and obviously it's going to take some time before we have complete free and equal access to both sides.

Mr Lalonde: On May 7 in this House the member for Nepean said that constituents in his riding were concerned about the monitoring of this agreement. Your answer to the member was, "The agreement is there and is working." Last Thursday my office received a phone call from Alexanian Carpet in the riding of Nepean that vans are being stopped and that unless the workers hold a Quebec permit, the van and the contents are being confiscated.

Ontario workers and contractors are reluctant to go to Quebec because they are victims of harassment. Their

cars and trucks are being vandalized and their tires are being slashed. Are you prepared to take necessary procedures to ensure that Ontario workers are treated fairly, that there will be no more harassment and vandalism. After all, are we not all Canadians?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's extremely important that we distinguish the situations you're presenting to us as being distinct from the negotiation of the agreement. For example, the incidents of vandalism that you refer to are obviously issues that need to be dealt with by the law authorities. It's not something we can do anything about within the agreement. I would hope that when these incidents do occur, those individuals who are responsible for law and order would take the appropriate means and deal with those issues appropriately. They are beyond what we are capable of doing in the agreement.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. A vital health care project is in danger of being lost. Savard's (Women's Street Survivor Project) is a shelter for homeless women with chronic and severe mental illness. It provides not just shelter, but medical attention and supervision for these women.

In spite of your announcements of money for community-based services, your ministry will not support this shelter and it is in danger of closing. Apparently, your ministry can't figure out whether this project belongs in the long-term-care system or the mental health system. The situation is inexcusable because this is exactly the kind of project we need to cope with both the closure of mental health beds and the reduction in emergency wards and acute-care beds in this province.

Minister, are you going to get your act together and ensure that services like this one are available when you bounce hundreds of patients out of your psychiatric hospitals?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The question, at the very least, is cruel and unwarranted. You closed psychiatric beds without putting the community services in place. That trend continued up until we came to office two years ago. We've put a moratorium on the closure of psychiatric beds until those community services are in place. No other government had the courage to do that. Secondly, we have put millions of dollars into exactly these types of community-based services, including crisis response and a whole range of services.

I will take from the honourable member the specific case and I will endeavour to get back to her, but to say that people are being put out in the street because of anything this government did is to not give credit where credit is due, and that is that we have been increasing community services and not allowing for the closure of mental health beds.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary, the member for Fort York.

1500

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): The number of women using the shelter system has increased dramatically. It's getting worse, partly because there is a lack of affordable land or appropriate housing. Everyone knows that. My colleague said Savard's is a unique environment,

providing a safe haven for women who have long histories of homelessness combined with serious medical problems, and mental health problems to boot.

This is an innovative project and it's in jeopardy of closing. Are you, along with the minister of the women's directorate and the Minister of Housing, going to let Savard's down, or are the three of you going to show leadership and find a way to make sure that Savard's is there to provide housing for those who are suffering a great deal?

Hon Mr Wilson: We're currently reviewing the situation that the honourable member describes. We're working with other ministries and Metro social services to determine whether this particular facility is one that should survive and continue to provide services or whether another plan is needed. Clearly we have increasingly more and more homeless people, clearly many of those people suffer mental illness and clearly we have to do more.

I will take the honourable member's submission into account when we make this decision, but I do sincerely want him to know that we're working very hard with a number of agencies to ensure that those community services, particularly services to homeless women, are increased in this province.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, as you know, I represent a riding high atop Hamilton Mountain that is made up of a significant percentage of blue-collar workers, all of whom have a vested interest in occupational health and safety, as do their white-collar colleagues and neighbours. They are, as I am, well aware of your ongoing review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. It's my understanding that the regional consultations have been completed. That being the case, could you please update us on the status of this review?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I'm pleased to report that yes, the regional consultations have finished. We did go to Hamilton, we went to Niagara Falls, Windsor, Barrie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Ottawa, and we met with unions, employees, employers and health and safety professionals. We are this week completing our consultations with some of our key stakeholders in Toronto, and this summer it is our hope that we can review the information that has been presented to us and collect all the feedback.

Mr Pettit: That's very encouraging news, but could you outline for the members of the House and also my constituents on Hamilton Mountain when we could anticipate hearing about the results of the review?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member knows, health and safety is certainly a priority for our government. Our objective is to ensure that we have among the safest workplaces in the world. In fact, we have recently set a target of a 30% reduction in lost-time injuries in this province by the year 2000. It is important that we draft legislation that will respond to the concerns that have been identified, and we hope that in the fall we will have something ready for the members of this House.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you would like to be viewed by the public as a road safety guy, the guy who is going to make our roads safe. Frankly, it's all wet, because none of that is coming true.

We have a very specific request for you that we have put in writing, that we have met individually about. We have talked to you about this for months. We're asking you for a flashing warning light on Huron Line and Cousineau Road so that people in my riding who are near this very large thoroughfare with all of this truck traffic can feel safe when they're crossing the intersection.

We have school buses carrying children, our precious cargo, every day going through this intersection and we are simply asking you for a second flashing warning light at that corner. The people in my riding will be very interested in your response today because you're the guy who says you're all about road safety.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): Certainly I would like to thank the member for the endorsement as this government is committed to safety. But as far as the flashing red light the member mentioned is concerned, we have installed one of these lights in her particular region. We've also done various lights throughout the province in other areas.

One of the things we have said is that we'd like an opportunity to see if these flashing lights are indeed going to work before we start investing in more of these flashing lights and then finding out that they aren't really going to make a difference in the traffic, so why spend money. Possibly we have to put in a full-blown light rather than just a flashing light.

I want to tell the honourable member that we are committed to safety and we are going to do what it takes to make sure that our roads are in fact safe.

PETITIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition concerns smaller class sizes and Bill 110. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the private member's bill introduced by Rick Bartolucci, MPP for Sudbury, which promotes smaller class sizes, passed second reading; and

"Whereas this bill, known as Bill 110, was referred to the social development committee; and

"Whereas we, the stakeholders in education, want the government committee to hear what we have to say about smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas we want to hear what the government committee has to say regarding smaller class sizes; and

"Whereas all people in Ontario have a right to speak to the social development committee about smaller class sizes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the recommendation that the social development committee travel across Ontario to find out what the students, parents, teachers and taxpayers

of Ontario are saying about smaller class sizes and Bill 110, the smaller class sizes act."

Of course I affix my signature to the petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by hundreds of members of the United Food and Commercial Workers, Locals 175 and 633, and this was forwarded to me by Herb MacDonald, who is the benefits coordinator for those locals. The petition reads as follows:

"To Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system including reducing benefits; excluding claims for repetitive strain injuries, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress, harassment and most occupational diseases; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; integrating sick benefits into WCB; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT; including eliminating worker representation on the board and eliminating the bipartite WCB board of directors.

"We, the undersigned, therefore demand a safe workplace, compensation if we are injured, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, an independent appeals structure with worker representation, access to the office of the worker adviser, that the WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

TVONTARIO

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I affix my own signature in full agreement with the petition.

1510

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CLINICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition, signed by union members all across Ontario, forwarded to me by the Ontario Federation of Labour.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc (OHCOW) provides high-quality professional medical, hygiene and ergonomic services to

employers, workers, joint health and safety committees and their communities;

"Whereas the professional services that the Ministry of Labour once provided are being offloaded to organizations such as the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, increasing the demand for the services provided by OHCOW;

"Whereas the professional and technical expertise and advice provided by OHCOW have made a significant contribution to improvements to workplace health and safety as well as the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the government to maintain the funding of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers and oppose any attempt to alter the governance structure or erode the professional and technical services of OHCOW.

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that OHCOW be provided with the necessary funds to allow expansion into other Ontario communities in order to provide the professional and technical services needed to reduce occupational injuries, illnesses and death."

I add my name to theirs.

WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition here which I'm submitting on behalf of the member for Simcoe West signed by approximately 363 residents of his riding. It concerns Women's College Hospital. The petition is opposed to the changes that are being contemplated by the restructuring commission.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I received the following petition from a number of people who are addressing it to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are

accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I am in full agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions signed by members of the Bricklayers' and Masons' Union Number 1 from my home community of Hamilton-Wentworth. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas it is vital that occupational health and safety services provided to workers be conducted by organizations in which workers have faith; and

"Whereas the Workers' Health and Safety Centre has provided such services on behalf of workers for many years; and

"Whereas the centre has made a significant contribution to improvements in workplace health and safety and in the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the structure, services or funding of the Workers' Health and Safety Centre; and

"Further we, the undersigned, demand that the education and training of Ontario workers continue in its present form through the Workers' Health and Safety Centre."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

CHILD CARE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas child care is an essential service to the working parents of Ontario;

"Whereas early childhood education is an important aspect of child development;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Maintain wage grants for professionals and providers in licensed child care at existing levels; and

"Maintain present ratios for children under the age of five; and

"Conduct public consultation across the province before the implementation of the child care review."

ROUTE 17

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai une pétition ici à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que des accidents surviennent sur une base régulière et qu'un rapport de la Police provinciale de l'Ontario de Rockland démontre que 23 accidents sérieux sont survenus au cours des huit derniers mois sur la route 17 entre Rockland et Orléans ;

«Attendu qu'une étude démontre que pas moins de 18 000 voitures circulent chaque jour sur cette portion de 20 kilomètres de la route 17 ;

«Attendu que la conception d'ébauches est complétée, des audiences publiques ont eu lieu et des parcelles de terrain ont été achetées ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons au ministre des Transports, Al Palladini, de remettre sur la liste des priorités le projet d'élargissement de la route 17 entre le chemin Trim et Clarence Point et nous demandons au gouvernement de mettre de côté les fonds nécessaires pour l'exécution de ce projet avant de remettre aux municipalités la responsabilité de la route 17.»

J'y ajoute ma signature.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Cathy Maxwell of the early childhood education department of the Fennell campus of Mohawk College. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Labour has begun a process to fundamentally alter the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations with the release of the discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act;

"Whereas these changes threaten to deregulate the health and safety protection for workers and reduce or eliminate the rights of workers and joint health and safety committees;

"Whereas the ministry intentionally organized meetings in a manner which allowed only marginal opportunity for workers to discuss with the ministry the issues raised in the discussion paper;

"Whereas workers deserve a full opportunity to be heard regarding the proposals that threaten the legislated provisions that provide them with protection from workplace injury, illness and death;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose the deregulation of workplace health and safety and any erosion of the protection provided workers under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

"Further we, the undersigned, demand that province-wide public hearings be held once any amendments to the act are introduced."

As I agree with the content, I sign this petition in support.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I have a petition from some residents of the riding of Niagara South which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontarians are gravely concerned with the historic \$1.3-billion cuts to base funding of hospitals; and

"Whereas Ontarians feel that health services are suffering; and

"Whereas the government is reducing hospital funding and not reinvesting millions of dollars into the communities that they are being taken away from;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Conservative government to stop the cuts to base funding for hospitals across Ontario and to ensure that community services are in place before the removal of hospital services. The Conservative government must fund hospitals with a funding formula that reflects demographic and regional needs. The Conservative government must ensure that health services are available, including emergency and urgent care, to all Ontarians."

1520

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules for the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and retain rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by Julie Nielson, the WCB specialist from the building trades WCB services. The petition reads as follows:

"To Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits; excluding claims for back injuries, carpal tunnel, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress and most occupational diseases; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury;

privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; eliminating worker representation; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT; deducting Canada pension plan disability benefits and union pensions dollar for dollar from WCB benefits;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, demand compensation if we are injured, a safe workplace, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, that WCAT be left intact and the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON

REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Frank Sheehan (Lincoln): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr64, An Act respecting the National Ballet of Canada.

Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr80, An Act respecting the Young Women's Christian Association of Niagara Falls.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF HAMILTON ACT, 1997

Mr Christopherson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr51, An Act respecting the City of Hamilton.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Madam Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to proceed with second and third reading of Bill 135, An Act to amend the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Act and to make consequential amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is that agreed? Agreed.

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

OF WATERLOO

AMENDMENT ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE DE WATERLOO

Mr Leach moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 135, An Act to amend the Regional Municipality

of Waterloo Act and to make consequential amendments / *Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la municipalité régionale de Waterloo et apportant des modifications corrélatives.*

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I introduced this package of amendments on June 2 to respond to a local solution for a municipal restructuring that all municipalities in the area have agreed to. We are implementing a local request with this legislation.

This bill will reduce the size of regional council to 22 members from 26. This legislation will also allow for the direct election of the regional chair. These measures will result in fewer politicians and improved accountability for the municipal government in the Waterloo region.

In six of the seven municipalities which make up the region, excluding Kitchener, members of the regional council will be elected by voters to sit on both the regional and local councils in the 1997 municipal elections. In Kitchener, this form of double direct election will not take place until the year 2000, as council has not yet completed its discussions on the election of its representatives to the regional council. Kitchener regional councillors will continue to be chosen by the Kitchener city council in 1997.

As you know, municipal restructuring is a cornerstone of the government's overall agenda and I am very pleased to be able to further the process in this very important region of Ontario. The new restructuring process we have set in motion across this province will result in stronger municipalities that are fiscally better to position for the future.

We will continue to shrink government, and that's because all citizens of Ontario are shouldering too large a tax load. The taxpayers want a smaller, more efficient public sector and they want less government.

Waterloo region has understood what some others have not: that it's important to put new structures in place now.

I would like to acknowledge the involvement and support of the government caucus members from the Waterloo region, including the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Labour, and the municipal representatives in the area, including the regional chairman. They all agree that it is important for this bill to be in place for this November's municipal elections. They agree there is a need to streamline the representational system, improve accountability and reduce the size of government.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Let me at the outset say that we agree with this particular amendment. I know it's something the regional municipality of Kitchener-Waterloo has been looking for for some time. As a matter of fact, we were prepared to move on this a month or so ago and for some inexplicable reason it wasn't dealt with at that point in time. But we certainly feel it ought to be dealt with so that the people in the region of Waterloo and all the municipalities that form part of the region know exactly what the electoral process is going to be this coming fall. It's unfortunate that not all the citizens in some of the other

areas that are looked at for restructuring will have that same luxury.

As we saw yesterday, there was a private member's bill introduced, for example, for Ottawa-Carleton that calls for a report to be presented by October 1. Nobody seems to know, whatever that report may say, whether it's going to be a one-tier region, whether it's going to be a number of municipalities restructured as they are in that particular area, what form it will take as far as the election in November of this year is concerned. It leaves those people who want to run for office up in the air as to exactly what they're running for, but it also leaves the general public up in the air as to exactly what kind of formal structure they will have come election time. It seems to me people have the right to know what kinds of councils with what kind of governance structure they're going to have at least three or four months before the municipal elections this year.

There were a couple of interesting comments the minister made. First of all he talks about the notion of reducing the number of municipalities we have in Ontario from over 800 to somewhere around 650, that that's a cornerstone of this government's agenda.

I have maintained all along that a bigger government isn't necessarily a better or cheaper government, and that seems to be the modus operandi this government is operating under, that as long as we get rid of all sorts of local governments and get rid of more and more politicians, local politicians, then somehow we'll all be better off. I don't think that's necessarily so at all. There may very well be situations where as a result of locally driven solutions municipalities decide to merge, amalgamate or restructure, and I'm totally in favour of that. But to go at it in a way whereby the blame for all the problems that municipalities, according to the government, have is somehow due to the number of local municipal politicians we have right now, that that is the main problem of local government, I totally reject that.

For example, when we look at Chatham-Kent and the restructuring proposal that was put into place there, which will take it from 141 municipal politicians in that area to 18, I say to myself, without knowing all that much about it other than the briefings I've had and what I've read in the paper and the contacts I've had in that area, that 141 local politicians may very well be too many, but I certainly think that going to 18 to look after that same area — you're still going to have the same land mass, you're still going to have the same municipal problems, you're still going to have the same service levels etc presumably that were there before — is simply going too far.

What you're really talking about, when you go down from 141 politicians to 18 politicians — or you can pick whatever number you want — what you're saying is that the local politicians simply will not have the same ability to react to the kinds of problems his or her neighbours or constituents may have in the same way they currently do. One thing that undoubtedly is going to happen is that the contact between the local politician and the constituent in those particular wards or areas or ridings is going to diminish tremendously the more local politicians you take out of the process.

I'm very concerned about that because I firmly believe that one of the reasons local government has worked

extremely well in Ontario over the last 100 to 150 years is that in most situations there is the immediate contact between local politicians and the people they represent. What we're talking about with all these amalgamations is, number one, less democracy. The kind of input the local citizen wants in this local decision-making process will simply not be the same if the politicians he or she wants to have contact with are going to be further and further removed from the process and are going to represent larger areas with many more people than they presently do.

The basis of this seems to be that the government somehow wants the people of Ontario to believe that politicians are the people who cost money in the system. Although that may be something a lot of people can nod their heads at and say, "Yes, I think that's so," in reality that's not the situation. When you look at the fact that the average municipal politician in this province probably makes somewhere between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per year and does it on a part-time basis, certainly they are not the cost of running local municipalities. In most cases it's well below 0.001%. This whole notion that if we somehow got rid of local politicians we'd all be better off is something I totally reject.

The other thing that's part and parcel of this is the whole downloading of services on to local municipalities. I don't want to go over the whole situation again, but we all know that as a result of the suggested downloading changes the government made earlier this year, in effect an extra \$1 billion was being downloaded on to the local property taxpayer. Let's never forget that. Yes, they were going to take over \$5 billion worth of educational costs from the local property tax base, but about \$6.4 billion was going to be added on.

Then, as a result of meetings that took place with AMO and other representatives and as a result of the human outcry that took place in the province, the government went back on some of the original proposals it had made. Where it wanted to download health services, social services, social housing costs, ambulance costs etc on to the local taxpayer, it sort of halved it.

The bottom line is, according to our calculations and according to AMO's calculations as well, that about \$600 million more in costs are still being downloaded on to local municipalities by the province than is currently the case. So local property taxpayers are going to pay more if they want the same services.

The real pressure is going to be on those local municipal councils — who obviously do not want to pass on a 10% or 20% property tax increase to their local rate-payers, which is totally understandable — to cut out various services or increase property taxes next year. They're not going to want to increase the amount of taxation, so they're going to cut services. That is the bottom line in the whole thing.

The people of Ontario have to understand that social housing costs in this province, which amount to about \$900 million, will be completely downloaded on to local municipalities. The real tragedy of this is that in many cases these costs have been incurred as a result of agreements for non-profit housing, co-op housing and other social housing where contracts were signed directly between the province and local organizations, local non-profit housing providers, where the municipality had

absolutely no input. Yet those annual subsidy costs are now going to be passed down on to the local property taxpayer. That's just one major area.

Another area is the whole notion that health units are now going to be paid for completely out of local taxes. I know there's a tremendous concern within the health unit community as to exactly how that cost is going to be allocated among the many constituent municipalities that make up a health unit district or a health unit area. Nobody seems to know. The ministry doesn't seem to know; certainly the local health units don't seem to know.

New costs are going to be downloaded on to local communities as well. Ambulance services that have never, ever been part of the local municipal costs —

1540

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): A point of order, Speaker: There is absolutely no quorum in this House and I think you should check for that.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Marchese: Sorry about that, John.

Mr Gerretsen: No, that's quite all right. It's certainly too bad that on such an important bill as this, which the Minister of Labour would certainly attest to, as she is a representative from this area — you would expect government members to be interested in this highly important matter of how we're going to restructure the region of Waterloo and you would expect them to be listening to some of this debate because they're very much interested in this bill.

You've got to remember that we were prepared to pass this bill a month ago so that the people and the politicians of Waterloo could get ready for the election in November. I've no idea why the government held it up, but they held it up for whatever reason, and then not to have a quorum in the House to actually debate the merits of this bill is somewhat unfortunate.

Let me conclude, and I am going to conclude. I'm not going to prolong this any more than we ought to talk about this. I think I'm quoting the minister correctly. He says, "Local taxpayers are paying too large a tax load currently, and one of the reasons we're into restructuring is so that they'll be paying less." He's saying it's right.

I ask him, why have you then downloaded so many other municipal services on to the local property tax base? You took education off, yes; that's \$5.4 billion. But you originally tried to unload \$6.4 billion on the local property taxpayer. Then you had these meetings with AMO, and I'm sure you and your parliamentary assistants were sweating quite a bit because AMO, which I think you and I will agree is an independent organization and doesn't adhere to any one political party, came up with figure after figure for each and every municipality that clearly showed that your plan was going to cost the local taxpayer more and more money.

In the city of Kingston it was going to be an extra \$28 million and I believe in Waterloo it was going to be \$32

million. It was going to be \$105 million in one of the regions right in the Metro area. They caught you. Here you're saying you want to unburden the local taxpayer from too large a tax load they're currently paying, yet at the same time you were downloading \$1 billion on to them, which would have meant an increase of about 10% to 20% in property taxes across the province.

You met with the municipal leaders and they said to you: "Minister, you can't do this. In 99% of the municipalities in Ontario the local taxpayers are going to be paying more and more money as a result of this. We have to come up with something else." You came up with something else and they were very happy, because now the downloading is no longer \$1 billion but something like \$665 million.

You know it and I know it, and I'm afraid that next year the property taxpayers around the province will know it as well, because the burden you have placed on local municipal councils is to do one of two things: They can either decrease services — and I'm convinced in my own mind that's one of the things you're after — or they can increase taxes.

Nobody likes to increase taxes. What's going to happen in all likelihood is that there's going to be a small property tax increase but there's going to be a large decrease in the kinds of services local municipalities are currently able to give to their local taxpayers.

We can argue about this all we want. We can start blaming the province or the local communities, and you can say this and I can say that, but the bottom line is this: Is the taxpayer better off in the long run in terms of the kinds of services they demand from their municipalities, and are they going to be paying more or less than they're currently paying? That's the bottom line. That's the only thing that really matters. Nothing else matters. They're not concerned about whether it's your fault or the municipality's fault or what have you. They want the services, and they want to pay as few property tax dollars as possible. That's what this is really all about.

I hope the people of Ontario will remember that this is the government that has downloaded an extra \$600 million in costs on them; that this is the government that in effect is taking away much of the democratic voice they have in each of the local municipalities, whether they be municipal councillors who in many cases are no farther away than the next concession road right now or within the immediate neighbourhood these people happen to live in or whether we're talking about school boards.

Let's face it, what the whole amalgamation process in the school board area is really all about is to have fewer and fewer school trustees. Some people may say, "Well, that's a good idea," until they actually want to speak to somebody and try to influence a decision at the local council or school board. The school boards are going to be larger and larger. Then they might say, "My gosh, that councillor who used to be down the next concession line," or used to live three or four blocks over, may be miles away now, and, "Why can't I ever get hold of the person?" That person is going to be busier and busier.

As I mentioned before, in a place like Chatham-Kent, if you get rid of 90% of your elected local politicians, when you go from 141 local politicians in total down to

18, you are simply not going to get the same kind of service, you're not going to get the same kind of response and you're not going to have the ability to speak to your local representatives in the same way you do now.

By doing that, we're losing an awful lot, because the other result that's going to happen is that the few politicians that are going to be left at the local level are going to become more and more professional. They are not going to be part-time people. Many of these people are part-timers right now; they have a foot in the community and also in the political process, which I think is a good thing. They're going to be full-time politicians who will do almost anything to hang on to their job around election time. I don't think the system as a whole is better for it.

With that, I will simply say that we will be supporting this bill. We understand it has the support not only of the region but of all the area municipalities. I'm very pleased that in actual fact these people will know about four or five months in advance what system of government will be in place for them come election time. I really wish the people in Ottawa-Carleton would know that, because they still don't have a clue about whether they will be electing a one-tier government this November, whether they will be electing people to four or five different municipal councils or whether there will be both local councils and a regional council. Certainly the reporting date of October 1 that has been suggested for the committee to report is way too late to actually have a meaningful impact on the local elections that are going to take place there in November of this year.

With that I will simply conclude my remarks and indicate that I will support this bill, but we will be talking again about the property taxpayers in this province next year, and I guarantee you — you may think you are a very popular individual right now — that once the property taxpayers start paying 10% or 20% more than what they are paying now or have fewer services next year, you won't be such a popular individual.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Marchese: I support the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Amendment Act —

The Acting Speaker: Do you understand this is questions and comments or are you making your speech now?

Mr Marchese: I beg your pardon, Madam Speaker. I thought we weren't going to do that.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat for a moment. Are there any questions or comments? No. Okay, further debate.

Mr Marchese: I was quite happy to allow the government members an opportunity to speak because they don't get much of a chance to do that in government. I'd be quite willing to sit down if they want to speak.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Seniors Issues]): There's a lot of it in caucus.

Mr Marchese: There's a lot of discussion in caucus.

Interjection: And in committee.

Mr Marchese: And in committee. I'm happy to hear Minister Jackson say a lot of talking goes on in caucus. We never get to hear about it because they never get to

speak here in the House, but rest assured they're talking in caucus. I'm happy to hear that.

I support the changes that are being introduced through this act, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Amendment Act, and I'm happy to hear that my good friend M. Leach, the minister, thanked M^{me} Witmer, the Minister of Labour, for her involvement. They must have worked very closely together because there appeared to be a great deal of cooperation between the ministers and with the regional municipality of Waterloo. He thanked M^{me} Witmer, the Minister of Labour, for her involvement. This is M^{me} Witmer, that very nice, calm, serene, tranquil person who wouldn't hurt a fly — except maybe injured workers. But I'm happy to say that they've been working together in this regard, unlike Chatham-Kent.

You know what happened in Chatham-Kent. The minister hired some guy called Dr Meyboom, whom I call Dr Doom because of what he decided to do to Chatham-Kent. Dr Meyboom disregarded much of what people in Kent county in particular had to tell him. Many deputations were heard by Dr Doom, but in the end, Minister, it's true, he completely disregarded it. I was there in Kent county, and the people who were there — councillors no less, not just regular people out there, councillors who came to make a deputation in front of Dr Meyboom — told him what they thought should happen and they were completely shut out. They weren't listened to. I know Minister Leach, in answer to my questions to him, twice said: "That's not true. The guy is a respected man. Everybody loves what he did." But it's not true.

Hon Mr Leach: It is true.

Mr Marchese: It isn't, Minister Leach. I was there, and there have been a number of articles attacking the minister and Dr Meyboom on how that process evolved, which in my view and their view was a very autocratic process. That is why I say they are leaving a stench of autocratic behaviour across Ontario, because of these kinds of things they are doing. In Metropolitan Toronto, they completely disregarded 76% of the people who voted who said no to the megacity. That's autocracy in my view.

Dr Meyboom, the henchman hired by the minister, disregarded everything the people of Chatham-Kent had to say. That is autocracy in my view. It is anti-democratic. It is not respecting the wishes of people, not just in Metro but in Chatham-Kent.

The minister stands up and says that's not true, but I'll tell you, his own member in that Kent county region is going to be one unhappy fellow. He is not attending their meetings, I'm told. I think he's scared. I would be too. I would be scared to go to those people who have been shunned, shut out by Dr Meyboom and the minister. The minister is saying, "Everybody's happy," and they're saying, "But that's not true." They're shut out.

It is autocracy, anti-democratic. It is not listening to the voice of the people, which is something this Reform Party claims to listen to but does not. I'll tell you the people they're listening to. They're listening to M^{me} Witmer —

The Acting Speaker: May I remind the member —

Mr Marchese: — the Minister of Labour, yes —

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Marchese: — who is a very tranquil minister but obviously very influential with Mr Leach. They obviously talked together about how —

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Municipal Affairs. They obviously talked about how to solve it in the region of Waterloo in an amicable way. Witness the fact that in Kitchener they don't have to adopt the arrangement that everybody else does until the year 2000. Do you see how accommodating M. Leach was to the region of Waterloo? M. Leach, the Minister of Housing.

The Acting Speaker: I know the member forgets, but if I could remind him to refer to members by their riding or, in the case of ministers, their ministry.

Mr Marchese: I thank you, Speaker, for the reminder. I need to be reminded from time to time.

Do you see the people the Minister of Municipal Affairs is listening to? He listens to the Minister of Labour, M^{me} Witmer. He listens to her; he listens to Dr Meyboom, that well-paid hired gun, paid by the minister to disregard the voices of the people. He listens to them. But in Chatham-Kent, where people were crying against this legacy of autocracy that this government is leaving, they didn't listen; and they didn't listen in Metro.

What can you deduce from all of that? I leave that to all of you. I leave that to the people of Chatham-Kent to assess: the treatment you are getting versus the kinder and more gentle treatment they're getting in the region of Waterloo. People need to see that there are differences in terms of how they're being treated, and that's what we're here to point out.

When the regional municipality of Waterloo called us and said they had some amendments they would like to introduce and asked would we support them, we said yes. But those amendments would have to be worked out through our House leaders. I gave no commitment to do it in any other way except that I knew our House leader wanted and needed to be involved. You know what happened? In one of the committees that I was a member of, while we were discussing the Development Charges Act, at the very end of those amendments to the Development Charges Act, the parliamentary assistant, who happens not to be here at the moment, introduced these very changes we're dealing with here today. I was shocked when I discovered, in complete surprise, that the parliamentary assistant was introducing them at the end of the Development Charges Act, without notice, without discussion.

When I was alerted to that problem I said to the parliamentary assistant: "Did you talk to the House leaders? Do you have agreement?" He said yes, but I urged him to check it because I didn't think there was any agreement. When he came back after we broke, and we dealt with this at the following meeting, we clearly knew there was no agreement.

What I disliked about that was the serpentine way of dealing with the issue. It was underhanded, in my view. It was not a decent way, a decent process to deal with something that all of us clearly today are speaking to and are in agreement with.

For me, when you want to make changes to something that there is some agreement on, you've got to deal with

it with the right process. But it speaks to the *modus vivendi* of this government in terms of how they try to push through their issues: autocratically, often with incompetence and every now and then in their serpentine way of trying to sneak this thing through. But it's here today, after we have had discussion through our House leaders to have this bill introduced in this way.

1600

Minister Leach says he's happy to introduce this, that politicians are going to be eliminated, he's happy about that, and that of course as a result of that there are going to be tremendous savings and all of you fine taxpayers out there can thank Minister Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, M^{me} Witmer and all the other ministers for all the great savings you're going to have.

I tell you, those of you who are watching, to become vigilant, to be vigilant around these issues, because they claim that there are going to be savings as a result of all these amalgamations. We have argued through the evidence we have seen from all the experts that there are no savings. In fact, as you centralize power and as you amalgamate the various municipalities in creating a big bureaucracy of that kind, you will be increasing costs not saving them. So what do I tell you taxpayers? Keep an eye on this.

If this government doesn't call an early election and we have a couple of years to see how this unfolds, you will be able to determine for yourselves without much study or experts whether the minister, M. Leach, is right or whether he's wrong. Based on the research we have to date, my view is that they are dead wrong. There are no savings to be had. You taxpayers are not going to have money in your pockets; in fact you will have less money in your pockets and more to spend to deal with the policy changes that are being introduced by these fine fellows across from me.

You can expect a heftier tax load as they download more and more to municipalities and consequentially to the homeowners and the tenants who pay for the downloading of a whole new set of things that this government wants to shed, abrogate itself from, so that you municipalities and you people in the municipalities as homeowners and tenants are going to have to pick up the cost.

That is the legacy this government is leaving you, and some of you believe that somehow this government is going to save you some money. I know many of you believe it, because they continue to repeat the fact that as we get rid of these governments and as we get rid of these local levels and all these municipal politicians, somehow miraculously there are going to be a whole lot of savings. I know some of you watching this channel today believe them. I ask you to stay tuned, follow it very carefully, because there are not going to be any savings. Speaker, you know, now that you're in the chair, there are not going to be any savings. There are going to be a whole lot of tax increases that you're going to have to explain to your taxpayers, because that's what you like to refer to your electorate as.

The changes proposed today are reasonable. These are changes that obviously the region had an opportunity to discuss among themselves. When changes happen as a result of that discussion and dialogue — voluntary, not forced — they tend to come up with better solutions as

opposed to what's going to happen in Chatham-Kent where it was a forced amalgamation and not voluntary.

In this case the region says: "We want two things. We want to be able to have direct elections at the region as we do the council." That's okay. That's what we call the double direct system for electing its council members, and in this case they're saying mayors automatically will get a regional seat. That's fine. These are not changes I could disagree with because they grow out of the community. When democracy is at work we have better solutions.

Their suggestion of reducing the number of politicians, if accepted by the people of the area, I support, and the double direct system for electing its council members is something I support as well.

I remind the people watching that in the case of Chatham-Kent and Metro, and I suspect a whole lot of other communities, you will not get direct democracy to deal with your problems. The people of the regional municipality of Waterloo are in a much happier situation today, because consultation has been permitted to happen. That's what you need to fight for. That's what you need to remind M. Leach, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that you want democracy to work in your communities and that anything short of that is autocracy and anti-democratic, as we have witnessed in Metro and Chatham-Kent.

The member from that region is here now today. I'm glad he's here, because I tell you, the people in your region are not happy and at some point you're going to have to become accountable to them. Usually it's at election time, but many of the members want you to be accountable in between elections. That's why they often call meetings and they invite you. I urge you, Mr Carroll — not you, Mr Johnson — to go to those meetings when called, because if nothing else it's good to be brave and face the populace, face the crowds, face those who disagree with you.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): How many people were at the meeting?

Mr Marchese: There were a lot of people at the meeting, Mr Carroll. There were over 25 people, including all the media people who were there.

Mr Carroll: Out of 109,000.

Mr Marchese: Yes, but you can take comfort in the fact that Dr Doom is in agreement with you and that the two of you were in cahoots with each other. Take comfort from that. But I don't and I know the people of that region don't take comfort from that kind of autocracy.

As the New Democratic Party, we're supporting these changes. We think because there has been involvement by the communities it's a good thing and we support the amendments introduced today by the regional municipality of Waterloo.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): Questions and comments? Further debate? Minister, do you wish to conclude the debate?

Hon Mr Leach: Yes. Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, this is your wrapup for second reading, if you wish to use that time.

Hon Mr Leach: I believe the comments that have been made by the two opposition parties were sufficient

to confuse the audience today as to what this bill is really about. This is a bill to create direct elections of the regional chair in Kitchener-Waterloo and to reduce the number of councillors from 26 to 22, a very simple bill that probably didn't require the rhetoric that took place across the hall about other parts of Ontario like Chatham-Kent and Metropolitan Toronto.

I believe there has been sufficient debate on this bill and I move second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

Hon Mr Leach: I believe we have unanimous consent for third reading of Bill 135, and I believe we have unanimous consent for no debate on third reading, Mr Speaker, and I move third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed that there be no debate? It's agreed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1610

EXTENDED HOURS OF MEETING

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 6(b)(i), the House shall continue to meet from 6 pm to 12 midnight on June 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25 and 26, 1997, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to split the time in three on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): Is it agreed that the time allocations would be split equally? Agreed.

Hon David Johnson: This is a traditional motion, and the standing order provides for extended hours during the last eight days of the parliamentary calendar to allow for the business to be cleared up, as they say, before the end of the session.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Is there a provision for overtime pay?

Hon David Johnson: My colleague opposite asks if there's overtime pay. How many years have you been here now? Well over 20 years?

Mr Wildman: About 23.

Hon David Johnson: Having been here for some 23 years, he knows better than any of us here there's no overtime pay. There's just the joy and privilege of serving in this House and going about the business for the people of Ontario, which we're all delighted and proud to do.

The members of this House are very hardworking members. Every once in a while there's the tendency, particularly when one is quizzed by the media about the number of days that are worked in this House, the number of hours worked in this House, that sort of thing, because the calendar is I guess from March to the end of June and from September to the end of December, to say that there's a lot of time off. But I will say that members on all sides of the House work hard not only in this

House but back in their constituencies and with their various responsibilities on committees, travelling committees, committees here in Toronto. There's a great deal of effort put into the legislative process in many different ways and certainly the members are hardworking.

I would like to express my hope that we'll complete this debate as we've agreed upon today, because it is important to have those extra hours to be able to debate the many pieces of legislation. We have before us over 25 pieces of legislation at this moment, plus other important matters such as the concurrences, the Supply Act, the requirement to set a schedule for the summer. There are not only many pieces of legislation but motions that need to be dealt with. Indeed there are private members' bills —

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Hear, hear.

Hon David Johnson: — my friend from Scarborough East being one of those who has a very important piece of legislation, and he's reminded me from time to time that it's now the opportune moment for that piece of legislation to be introduced.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member for Essex-Kent.

Hon David Johnson: Indeed, the member for Essex-Kent. All parties certainly have private members' bills. That's absolutely right.

Mr Bradley: And the member for Fort William.

Hon David Johnson: No question about it, and it would be in keeping with tradition that we try to accommodate private members' bills as well as government legislation in the motion. So we need those extra hours and that's what this debate is about.

Some of my colleagues, indeed my colleague from Nepean in particular, have asked, "Should this debate be necessary?" Given that there are very few occasions historically when the House doesn't sit at least for some period of time in the evenings, through all three parties in government, should this be an automatic trigger, that these days automatically go to midnight? I see my colleague from St Catharines biting his lower lip, but we'll get an opportunity to debate that at some time in the future as we look at the standing orders. I'd be interested in the thoughts of the members of this House. Maybe this should be an automatic requirement, let's say, or an automatic situation that during the last two weeks of the session, those eight days, the midnight sessions be in place. We'll all have an opportunity to speak to that and we'll see.

Some of the pieces of legislation, I might say, that we are attempting to implement to make life better in Ontario — I was surprised, from the very fine work of Frank Sheehan and the red tape task force, that we still have eight bills from I think last spring which have not yet had third reading.

Mr Bradley: Let's get those through.

Hon David Johnson: The member for St Catharines said, "Let's get those through." I'm glad to hear that. Maybe the House leader for the NDP will say the same thing and we'll be able to accomplish getting those red tape bills through in the last two weeks of this session; cut the red tape, cut the red tape from the Ministry of the Attorney General, as one good example —

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You're dismantling the whole system.

Hon David Johnson: I'm sure my colleague from Kingston and The Islands would say that the Attorney General making more efficient use of hearings, and the Assessment Review Board and the public guardian's and public trustee's office, improving accessibility in those offices, promoting better customer service —

Mr Gerretsen: Unfortunately there's more to these bills than titles. The titles are great but they don't match the —

Mr Bradley: If only the bill were the same as the title.

Hon David Johnson: Well, I'll tell you all of these bills are attempting not only to cut red tape to allow businesses, boards and commissions to work better, but to improve the service to the people of Ontario, because that's what the bottom line is about. If we don't improve the service to the people of Ontario, then why are we here?

The Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations has legislation to reduce a number of redundant procedures and regulations. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines has Bill 68. This bill apparently repeals the Canada Company's Lands Act, 1922.

Mr Bradley: Good. Let's do that one.

Hon David Johnson: Let's do them all. Let's do this one, but let's do them all. That one, for example, removes the complex and lengthy process a landowner must go through to obtain a clear title, and I'm sure we would all agree with that. We want people not to be bound up in that red tape.

What else have we got here? We've got Bill 98, which has had second reading. The people of Ontario, those who are hoping to buy a home in the future but have very limited means — we know that development charges are a significant proportion of the cost of new housing in some areas. I'm sure we would all concur that to the degree we could take action in this House to reduce the cost of housing for the younger generations coming on, the younger generations that in future will want to buy an affordable house and an affordable property, we should do that. That's exactly what Bill 98 does. It encourages more affordable housing in Ontario. At the same time it recognizes the need of municipal governments to provide services, and those governments have to have a source of revenue to put in sewers and roads and that sort of thing.

There's a piece of legislation I'd like to see us deal with in the last couple of weeks: Bill 102, the Community Safety Act. "It would require," and this is from the Solicitor General, "that anybody applying for a change of name must disclose to the registrar general particulars of any outstanding law enforcement orders or pending criminal charges against them." The concern here is that certain individuals apparently have attempted to avoid the law in the past through a name change, I gather. This piece of legislation would deal with that issue.

1620

Mr Bradley: Let's bring it in and pass it.

Hon David Johnson: I agree. Let's bring it in, let's get it going because safety in our community is a very important issue. This is what we said during the last election and, I believe, has been our track record.

In terms of services, the provision of health services to the people of Ontario is number one, but education and the justice system in Ontario are very important services

to the people of Ontario that I know members of all parties would be happy to support.

The Provincial Offences Act: I would say we have agreement on how to deal with it. Unfortunately, it got a little off the rail and got involved in the committee of the whole somehow. I haven't quite figured out how that happened yet. That's another bill we need to deal with over the next two weeks, because municipalities are involved there again, and there's a revenue stream out of the Provincial Offences Act which will go to those municipalities as a result of their efforts in being involved with administration and prosecutorial responsibilities for certain offences. In other words, they will take the responsibility, as they have for parking tickets, because they can manage this on a local basis more effectively and efficiently, but they will also get the revenues and it's important that the two go hand in glove. We'll again as a result, I believe, have a better service for the people of Ontario.

We have more red tape bills again and I congratulate the red tape task force on its efforts. We have Bill 127, involving nurse practitioners, which I'd like to deal with over the next two weeks during this midnight sitting period. We are so — what's the word I'm looking for? — lucky and fortunate to have dedicated nursing staff in our hospitals and our public health units right across this province to give an excellent level of health care to the people. The bill provides a framework to allow nurse practitioners to provide an expanded range of front-line patient services to the people of Ontario which will improve access to primary care particularly in the rural areas, I would say. Again this is something I hope we can all get together and deal with.

Here's one we're particularly pleased about, Bill 129, and we may get an opportunity to deal with this one tomorrow. It's a possibility. I'll just put everybody on alert now that —

Mr Bradley: This is the one with the hostage in it.

Hon David Johnson: — this is the one, since I've been asked, that allows the people of Ontario to have their income tax reduced from 49% to 48% of the basic federal tax this year, and to 45% of the basic federal tax for 1998.

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson: I see cheering on both sides of the House. I might say that as a result of people being able to keep more of their own money and deal with their money in the way they see fit, we are seeing tremendous job growth in Ontario. Has anybody mentioned in this House that in the last three months we've had 100,000 new jobs created in Ontario? I just mentioned that because I hadn't heard a question on that over the last few days, and I wasn't sure if it had been brought to the attention of the opposition parties. We can have a little fun with that maybe, but in addition to that, the bill also doubles the maximum fine for selling or supplying liquor to persons who are under the age of 19.

Mr Bradley: I'm for that.

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson: Now I'm hearing general agreement all the way around. It amends the Tobacco Control Act to double the maximum fines for selling or

supplying tobacco to a person who is less than 19 years of age. It also deals with loan and trust companies.

On my list I had the Regional Municipality of Waterloo Amendment Act, but it's already done, so there you are: We're making wonderful progress.

I also have another one on my list. It's just wonderful to see this spirit of cooperation. Now, if we can get all these bills — bear in mind that there are over two dozen of them, but I think if we are creative, in the last two weeks we could deal with them all.

The Comprehensive Road Safety Act: This is one we've been privileged to deal with on second reading. It's out in committee now, with the cooperation of all members of the House. The committee is dealing with it, I believe, in three days of public hearings. There's a day of clause-by-clause, which expires in about two weeks' time; as a matter of fact, two weeks yesterday, I believe. I hope this would be back in the House two weeks from today and that we could give third reading to this. As we know, it deals with drinking drivers, putting in more backbone in terms of the drinking and driving issue, wheels coming off trucks and causing safety problems, the school bus safety issue.

Mr Wildman: Those were not wheels falling off the government agenda?

Hon David Johnson: The government agenda is doing quite nicely, thank you. We are right on track on the deficit. In the overall scheme of things, we're right on track. I will say that in terms of the number of bills that need consideration in this House — well, we'll talk about that another day.

Bill 139: I'm pleased my colleague from Victoria-Haliburton has introduced the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. I hadn't really had an opportunity to see what it accomplishes, but I'm very pleased to see —

Interjection: Neither has he.

Hon David Johnson: He's fully aware of it. I know we're all becoming more aware. It does make tougher enforcement provisions, providing greater protection for a wider range of species and generally improves the management of fish and wildlife resources. For example, the limitation period on prosecutions in this area will be increased from six months to two years. The bill prohibits the possession of wildlife and fish that were illegally taken from another jurisdiction. The bill further protects the black bear population, and the bill provides penalties for commercial offences respecting fish and wildlife resources up to \$100,000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years. These are matters that need to be taken quite seriously. This is just a sampling of some of the legislation that is required to be dealt with over the next couple of weeks and why we need the extra time involved.

With that, I'll bring my remarks to a close, and I believe there will be other members of the government who will wish to speak to this matter.

1630

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I rise to support government notice of motion number 23 standing in the name of the government House leader, Mr Johnson, who has just spoken.

I want to make some remarks this afternoon in supporting the motion, although I observe, as he takes his leave, that the government House leader seemed, in

passing, to suggest or at least imply that later today or tomorrow we might be seeing a package of proposals around rule changes. I myself have no difficulty with night sittings, I say to the government House leader. I've been around here a long time. I remember why we stopped having night sittings. I'm sure those problems will not recur, and if he can give me some satisfaction they won't recur, I will be the first to expedite his desire to have night sittings.

It's interesting to hear some of the newer intake proceed in this manner, as though there was not a good reason for ceasing and desisting night sittings. Would that the Minister of Community and Social Services was here today so she could perhaps share some of her memories of a former employer who was a particularly entertaining member of the night sitting regime that we used to have. I'm happy to support the motion. I'm happy to have Parliament work. I'm happy to be here morning, noon and night, if that's what it takes, because I think there is an important role for the Legislature to play in providing oversight, in holding the government accountable, not just this government but any government, for what it does or for what it doesn't do.

I must say I was also pleased to hear the government House leader say that from his vantage point he feels that the Legislative Assembly has some kind of a role to play, because that is at variance with the very careful and studied rhetoric the Harris Tories have employed over the last two and a half to three years. Never have I seen such a constant disparagement of the political class and of the parliamentary place as I've seen from the Harris Tories over the last three or four years. It has happened inside the place. It has happened outside the precinct. It has happened not only with respect to provincial politicians, but the government has had only more enthusiasm when it's been disparaging the municipal politicians.

I have been quite struck by how the party of Les Frost and John Robarts has, in this new incarnation, gone out of its way to abuse the school trustees and the local politicians. It has struck me, quite frankly, as remarkable that the Minister of Labour, a very capable woman whom I have known in her previous life as a school trustee, would actually, together with her colleague the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, sit quietly and allow the current Minister of Education to say publicly the kinds of things that he has said about people like Liz Witmer and Dianne Cunningham in their previous lives as school trustees. I find it absolutely astonishing that people as capable as Liz Witmer and Dianne Cunningham are willing to be as disparaged in public by one of their own colleagues as they have been over the last number of months. Perhaps when she takes over the responsibility of the department of education later this year, she will have an opportunity to speak more directly to that.

It does concern me that we seem to be proceeding in a way around this place that less and less time is spent really doing the public business. There's a debate we'll probably have about rule changes. I don't really have much time or energy for that stuff any more. When I see good, smart people like O'Toole getting up as he did yesterday — and he's a smart member of this assembly — feeling it necessary to offer up that kind of a question, I say to myself, "What is the point?" There

doesn't seem to be any self-respect left. I don't mean to pick on the member for Durham East, because we've all had backbenchers who have done it. I just use him as the most current example.

There was a time when there was some honour and respect associated with being a member of the assembly, where you came here as a government member or as a member in the opposition not just to support the cause, not just to support one's party, not just to speak to riding issues, but in some more general way to speak to a public interest. The notion that the Legislature has some independent life and responsibility apart from the executive council is a notion that has basically gone. If you're a government member, it seems now all you care about is: "How do I get preferment? How do I get to the cabinet table?" I understand that. I understand that's a very powerful impulse. For opposition members, quite frankly, there is the increasing tendency to simply do the parish work.

We have collectively made this place less of a place than it used to be. So when we talk about rule changes I, for one, am not going to worry too much any more because I don't really see that the Parliament I came to 22 years ago has the kind of self-respect it has to have to do its work and to do its business. I don't blame anyone in particular. I think we've all got a responsibility. But I find it interesting that the notion that the Parliament, as Parliament, has an important independent responsibility is foreign to more and more people.

Having said that, I want to comment on some of the observations that the government House leader has made about public business. One of the reasons I'm pleased to support the motion is that there are a number of public issues my constituents want addressed and want there to be time for, a better public debate than we've had to date. They want, for example, more time focused on the implementation of the Harris government's health care agenda. The hospital restructuring in eastern Ontario is a shambles, getting worse by the moment.

I accept, as I have said repeatedly, that a restructuring is overdue and I'm not here to argue against the rising of the sun on the eastern horizon. But you know we have in Pembroke an admission this week from the hospital restructuring commission that the time lines they imposed a few months ago are totally unrealistic. We have in my community of Pembroke taken some of the deepest, harshest cuts in the hospital sector to date.

Next door in Ottawa we have a situation where independent analysts have gone into the national capital and said that the government's restructuring commission has overstated savings by as much as 80% in the national capital area. That's not some caterwauling oppositionist, that's not some special interest grinding an axe; that is a pair of independent analysts going in and looking at the work that has been done in the national capital area by the government's restructuring commission and stating that the government's own estimates, as presented by the restructuring commission, are overstating savings by 80%. My colleague from Vanier is better able than I to speak to those particulars.

We've been treated in recent weeks to the spectacle of the Deputy Minister of Health writing a letter to the commission saying, "You've miscalculated substantially

the impact of closing the psych hospital in Brockville and I, as Deputy Minister of Health, implore you to reconsider what you've done about the Brockville community and what it's going to be left with under the original plan of closing the entire Brockville site."

Can you imagine, as a citizen of Brockville or Leeds county, reading in the local Recorder and Times in Brockville that no less a person than the Deputy Minister of Health is writing to the commission saying, "I think you've made a serious mistake in this respect"? If you're a farmer up in the Athens area or a retail clerk in Brockville and you read that in the paper, what confidence does that give you about the efficacy and about the accuracy of what this commission has proposed?

1640

In my community of Pembroke, the commission came in in December of last year and offered up a plan it said would save \$14.7 million worth of costs in the hospital sector in a small county town, Pembroke. The savings, they said, would on an annual basis be in the order of \$14.5 million. They came back, the commission, just three months later and said: "We were wrong. We overestimated the savings by a factor of 35%." Now they've come back again and said: "We were wrong again about the time lines. This is too short. You can't shut down the emergency department at the Pembroke Civic Hospital at the end of June. We're going to give you an extension." People are crying out about the pain that's being felt about a plan that does not appear to be very well thought out.

Can there be change? Yes. Ought there be change? Absolutely. But I'm telling this House that there is a very real credibility problem in places like Pembroke and Ottawa and Brockville with what this commission has done. The government has created in Pembroke and Cornwall a very serious issue around the governance of the remaining hospitals, inviting in my community of Pembroke a serious sectarian issue that has been widely reported, and the Minister of Health stands there like Pontius Pilate, washing his hands and saying: "I have no responsibility. Let the sectarian fires burn. I don't have anything to say."

I just have to say to this House, without prejudice to either Catholic hospitals or civic hospitals, that is not good enough. Communities like Pembroke and Cornwall deserve a clearer policy on governance than this minister and this government have provided. The tragedy is that a lot of the progress that the government has won in this respect about restructuring is seriously threatened and undermined because the government has not itself developed a policy that is fair and balanced.

In my community we have been very well served. In Pembroke over a century we have been very well served, not just by the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who have run a very fine hospital — have and still do — at their site, the Pembroke General, but we have been very well served for a century by the people who have run the Pembroke Civic Hospital, who have been told by this government and this government's commission, "Thanks and goodbye."

The decision in Pembroke with respect to governance is unreasonable, it is unfair and it is unbalanced. It is creating no little bit of turmoil in the community, a

community that is clearly ready to accept significant change in the delivery and in the organization of institutional health care services. It's bad enough that the commission has not listened to what Catholic and non-Catholic alike have said to it; but that the minister does not seem to understand that he has a responsibility in the public interest to address this is positively breathtaking.

Do I want to sit morning, noon and night? I say to the government House leader, you're bloody right I'm willing to sit here, but I want to see some clarity around these issues that — oh yes, I have your assurance, like a good Sunday school teacher, that I will get it, but this session is a year old and I'm getting a little tired of waiting.

I hear the government House leader standing up and saying, "We've got to sit because I want to talk about our tax-cutting proposals." I want to come some night and talk about that. I think that the observations of Standard and Poor's last week or two weeks ago and of the Dominion Bond Rating Service on that subject are very timely and ought to be debated.

If I want to come here in a personal way, I could come and say what Mike Harris's tax cut is doing for me. I'm a winner. Boy, if I want to be just a selfish, greedy, self-centred yuppie, I should come here and sing a Te Deum of praise for the money you're putting in my pocket. But I am struck by what Standard and Poor's and what the Dominion Bond Rating Service have said. They have said, "We will not, two years into the mandate of this government, give an improved credit rating over that which Mr Rae had because we think this fiscal plan is inadequate in a couple of very real respects." They have said to you repeatedly that a tax cut of this magnitude while you're trying to sustain core programs like health care and education and work down the deficit is dangerous. I agree with them.

There is nobody around who is not going to want to see a tax cut, but Ontarians are prudent, sensible people. They have stated clearly and repeatedly that they want the fiscal house put in order and they want core programs, particularly health care, education, services for the elderly and children, maintained, and yes, when that is done — it's not an easy task and I share the government's frustration with some of what they inherited. I remember a bit of that myself, going into a cabinet 12 years ago, I think it was, and inheriting a deficit line, in the good old days, of \$3 billion in fiscal 1984-85. Hard to believe, I say to my friends opposite: in 1985 a fiscal plan that, when the Peterson government took office, showed an in-year deficit in the order of \$3 billion.

I say to my friend the member for Chatham-Kent that it was even more remarkable when I came here in 1975, under the able stewardship of Darcy McKeough, that I saw my first provincial budget that called for a \$1.8 billion deficit on about a \$13-billion spending plan. That was 22 years ago. I've said ad nauseam, is there lots of blame to share for this mountain of debt and deficit? You bet. I'll accept mine, but it does not attach to one side alone.

Back to my other point: Standard and Poor's and Dominion Bond Rating Service have said your fiscal plan is seriously flawed because it does not adequately take into account the cost of your tax cut, and they point out — I think this is especially timely in light of this past

spring's provincial budget — that they have observed the increased costs of municipal and hospital restructuring. Last year's budget, the provincial budget in Ontario in May 1996, estimated municipal and hospital restructuring to cost about \$900 million. I noticed in this year's budget that that cost has risen to \$2.3 billion, nearly a threefold increase. That's what Standard and Poor's is looking at and that's what the Dominion Bond Rating Service is also looking at.

Do we like a tax cut? Of course. Who is going to spit at Santa Claus? But what does prudent, commonsensical fiscal policy require?

I was struck today when I was reading the New York Times by a front page article, and a very interesting article: "Memo to Congress: Cutting Taxes a Luxury Now with Consequences Later." Tax cutting is the flavour of the month down in Washington. It is interesting to see what independent observers — I'm just going to read one paragraph from this story in the New York Times today:

"The House ways and means committee will take the first step on Wednesday towards parcelling out tax reductions to families and investors. Many of the new tax breaks under consideration, including a lower capital gains tax rate, are being structured so that the revenue loss will be small in the next few years, but will mushroom early in the next century when some future Congress can worry about the problem."

How typical. Back to Standard and Poor's. If there's a criticism of the Peterson government, and there are many, it is an absolutely fair thing to say that we spent at a level that could only be sustained by very high levels of economic growth and activity, and I accept the blame and the shame that goes with that. I want to say to this government, which prides itself on fiscal management, how is it that you are not playing the same game that's going on in Washington today, about which today's New York Times makes proper complaint? Or, more important, how is it that Standard and Poor's is not correct when it says your fiscal plan is seriously flawed in those respects that I mentioned earlier?

1650

I want to take a moment on another subject. I do share the enthusiasm of all members for the improved economic circumstances. I come from the Ottawa region. I am not going to be as effusive as the member for Nepean, who could hardly contain himself the other day with his joy about the Nortel announcement. There is great good feeling throughout the Ottawa region about the decision of Nortel to choose the Ottawa area for an expansion.

As members heard earlier this week, 5,000 new positions are going to be created in the next four years in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and that's great good news. They're high-tech jobs, high-skilled, high-salaried, a multiplier effect that's very considerable. The chief executive officer of Nortel, John Roth, said the other day that they chose Ottawa over other locations, including many in the United States, because in the end it was a quality-of-life issue. I hope people understand what that means. That means that many of the public investments we have made, made a difference.

Dare I say it? Is there a more lush government landscape, is there a more fertile field that has been sprinkled

with more public revenues than Ottawa-Carleton, I ask my friend the judge from Rideau? Probably not. There's not a farmer in Alberta who wouldn't agree with me. Much complaint has been made about that: "Too much money spent up there in old" —

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Thank Andy Haydon.

Mr Conway: But listen, those public investments, according to Nortel, made an important, critical difference. I share the joy, because it's going to be a positive impact for many of my constituents in communities like the lower Ottawa Valley.

However, I want to make this point: I watched an interview on CBC television the other night in Ottawa with Mr Roth, the CEO of Nortel. When asked about some of his concerns about a very substantial expansion in the Ottawa area, he said very clearly that one of his concerns is the state of the college and university sector in this province.

I want to say to the government, having spent some time visiting Carleton University the other day, that Carleton is a main supplier of the engineering and science folks to Nortel, and it is a concern of the Nortel people that we are not funding our college and university sector to an adequate degree. They are increasingly worried about not only funding issues but instructional issues and other aspects.

I simply raise today that there is good news out of the Nortel announcement, but there is also some very real warning for those of us who have some responsibilities, particularly in areas like post-secondary education.

I want to make a final observation today before my friend Bradley engages the debate; I'm supposed to leave him a bit of time. The unemployment rate is coming down, and that's good news. The adjusted rate is 8.5% for last month. We all share in that good news, but 8.5% is still a very high rate of unemployment. But this is not the whole picture. Many of you, unlike myself, are parents of young adults. One of the great challenges we face today as a community is this very serious, stubborn problem of youth unemployment.

The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, together with the Canadian Youth Foundation, has in recent weeks tabled a report about youth unemployment in Ontario and in Canada. I want to take a few moments to address what I think is fast becoming a very serious problem that, if not addressed by the community at large, is going to undermine much of the economic recovery and, quite frankly, threatens the social stability of this province and country of ours.

The report just done by the Canadian Youth Foundation tells us that one in five jobs held by young people in Canada has disappeared in the last seven years. That's an incredible statistic. One in five jobs held by young people before the last recession has disappeared. All of those jobs have been full-time jobs.

"Youth unemployment and underemployment are the most important social issues facing Canada today," says the president of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Al Flood. His report goes on to talk about chronic unemployment rates of 17%. Quoting now from the study, "Every work-related indicator points to deteriorat-

ing and increasingly precarious employment situations for youth in the 1990s."

The jobless rate for those with only a high school education is now at 23%; for those with a high school diploma, it's 15%; and for those with a community college diploma, it's 12%. Let me repeat that. The jobless rate in Canada today for people with some high school education is 23%.

I want to say to this House, it is not good enough for those of us, particularly people in my age category who were able to grow up in a post-war Ontario, and thanks to the sacrifices our parents made and the taxes they were prepared to pay, provided for people like myself and Bud Wildman basically free college education, and at the end of it — the member for Scarborough East looks quite —

Mr Gilchrist: In real dollars it's the same today.

Mr Conway: That is not true. That is simply not true. When I graduated from Queen's University in 1975, I'm going to tell you, the tuition in constant dollars was lower than it is today. Not only was it lower than it is today, but there were two or three jobs waiting for every one of us who graduated. For my generation to stand up today and say to 18- and 20-year-olds, "I think your tuition should be two and three times what mine was," is the absolute end of insult. That is unconscionable. I accept there is an argument that could be made, but it ought not to be made by people who are 40 and 45 and 50 in Ontario today, given what our parents did for us.

I want to make the point again, as I conclude my remarks today, that the Canadian Youth Foundation and business leaders like Al Flood are right to say that the single most serious social and economic problem facing Canada today is the ongoing scourge of youth unemployment rates that are averaging 17%, and for people with just part high school —

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Mr Speaker, will you please restrain the redoubtable member from Rexdale whose mutterings add nothing to a serious point that I think most members of this House would want to agree with.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Illogical, inverted logic.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Conway: There must be a tavern some place that requires a very active publican to go and do business.

I want to say in conclusion that the Canadian Youth Foundation and the president of the CIBC are right when they tell us that we all have a responsibility, not just government.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the remarks that were made by the member impugn the motives and the character of the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Gerretsen: He's right.

Mr Spina: They're all impugning the character of the member, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I don't believe that's a point of order.

Mr Spina: A point of privilege then. You're impugning character.

The Acting Speaker: Can you stop the clock. You're not making my brief opportunity as Speaker easier.

Mr Conway: I'll make your job easy. If I've offended the member, I retract entirely, but I find it difficult to speak to a serious point when I've got that kind of intervention.

I'm trying to make, I think, an ecumenical point, particularly for those of you with kids. When I go home and talk to my friends who've got 17-, 18-, 19-year-old kids, the one overwhelming question is their employment future. When they hear from government that the only thing we have to say is, "Hike the tuition and let the private sector do the job," they don't find that a totally satisfying answer.

I agree with Mr Flood and others: The corporate and private sector has got to do more, and we've got to use the bully pulpit of government to make the private sector do more. But we have responsibilities as well in government and I don't think we've discharged those, because as I said earlier, if we want real, sustained economic growth, and maybe more importantly, if we want genuine social security for the 21st century, we had better do a better job of dealing with this current unemployment rate for young people, because 17% is going to undermine social security and seriously impair any real economic growth.

1700

Mr Wildman: I rise to participate in this debate on behalf of our party because I want to make a number of points related to the agenda before us, the reason for the extended sittings as put forward by the government House leader, and some of the issues that I believe we as a Legislature should and must respond to.

I want to congratulate my friend from Renfrew North on the comments he just finished making. I find the reaction from the members across the aisle a little bit puzzling, because we face in Canada today, not just in Ontario, a very serious problem of youth unemployment and, even more so, of youth underemployment. Frankly, this is something that should be central to our agenda as representatives of the people of this province. Unfortunately, we have not dealt with this very much in this House and I don't see on the government's agenda, as outlined by the government House leader, much to do with this.

The fact is this: Very few young people today — I'll use an example of one person I know quite well, a young woman who is a graduate nurse who is working at two jobs. She has two jobs. She's lucky. They are both part-time jobs, because almost no agencies today hire nurses full-time. They can only get part-time positions unless they go to Texas or some other jurisdiction like that. The reason they don't hire them full-time, apparently, is because they don't want to pay benefits. So people are underemployed. This is a serious problem. It's a problem we have to face.

If you have high unemployment figures, as referred to by the member for Renfrew North in quoting the bank president, and you have a bank president expressing concern about the possible economic and social ramifications of long-term, growing youth unemployment or underemployment, it's a problem we should turn our minds to.

To have the response across the way pooh-pooh the issue or say that somehow the member is being overdramatic I think demonstrates a real problem. Unfortunately,

when one looks around this chamber, one does not see anyone — or very few; I shouldn't say anyone — one sees very few who represent that generation, who face very serious challenges that I did not face when I was their age.

As the member for Renfrew North said, when I graduated there were jobs all over the place. My second interview, I had my full-time position; first job, two interviews. The interview was like a travelogue. He looked at my résumé, he looked at my transcript and he spent the rest of the interview telling me what a great place Sault Ste Marie was and how I should come there to work.

Mr Spina: Yes, but you were from Echo Bay; that was a step up.

Mr Wildman: No, I was from the Ottawa area at that time. As a matter of fact, I'm very happy, obviously, that I went there. I got the job, I spent time working at that job and eventually got elected and came to this House to represent the people of the area.

The point is, young people don't face that kind of situation today. There isn't anything like that today. There are a few — a few — high-tech positions where graduates get picked up quickly and get positions, but in most cases young people face very serious debt loads because of student loans, debt loads that were unthinkable when I was a student. They're starting off in life as if they had a mortgage, though they don't yet own a house, and they can't get full-time jobs and they have collection agencies phoning them saying, "Make your payments on your student loan, as long as you've been six months out of school."

That's what we face, and I don't see anything on the agenda the government House leader has put before us that does one thing to address those serious problems that young people face. And it's not just a problem for young people; it's a problem for a whole generation and for our whole society, because if a generation feels shut out over a long period of time, that will produce serious social problems that will affect every one of us in our society.

I want to make a couple of comments about what the government House leader had to say. He read out a long list of bills and other motions that he felt needed to be dealt with by the end of June as a reason for extending sessional days to midnight. He mentioned the Waterloo bill. Well, let's talk about what's happened in this House today and over the last few days.

When there is good, necessary legislation put forward in a reasonable fashion by the government, this assembly has demonstrated that it can deal with it and deal with it efficiently and properly and get it through. The bill on governance of the Waterloo region was one that was supported by the local community, it was reasonable, all the members of the House, in looking at the legislation, understood that we were responding to a desire from the local community, and we were able to facilitate quick passage in this House. I would point out that that kind of quick passage and cooperation can be established because of a desire on the part of all members of the House to deal with issues that are important to the community. It doesn't require changes in the standing orders to get reasonable pieces of legislation through this House in an expeditious manner, and that has been demonstrated today and over the last number of days in this House.

The government House leader went through a long list, and I think I have the list before me. I tried to pay close attention to what he had to say. I can see that a number of the bills he has put forward can be dealt with by this House in a way that will meet the needs of the community and I think meet the desire of the government to deal with pressing matters in a way that will respond to the needs of the people of Ontario.

For instance, the government wants to have Bill 102, the Community Safety Act, passed. There are certain issues that should be addressed in dealing with that. It deals with the need to protect people and provide security, but at the same time it also deals with the rights of individuals, and those are rights that have to be dealt with and discussed so we can determine that we are dealing in a way that is fair and proper in a democratic society. It seems to us that we can deal with those matters well; we can hear from those knowledgeable experts in the field and from the public and we can get that through.

I think the government House leader mentioned Bill 108. We have an agreement, by the way, that it can be passed in one day at third reading. There is a bit of a glitch on Bill 108, because somehow it ended up in committee of the whole House for consideration. I know that the government House leader does not really want it to be at committee of the whole House because he doesn't think there are any amendments necessary and it's gone through standing committee.

We have raised a very important issue that was first addressed by my friend from Cochrane South when he pointed out that in downloading the dealing with these offences to the municipalities, the government had missed the point that the rights of francophones might not properly be protected in that situation since Bill 8, the bill that in this province protects the rights of francophones, does not apply to municipalities, despite the fact that the city of Sault Ste Marie in my own area a few years ago passed a bylaw saying they didn't want it to apply to them. It's unnecessary for that bylaw to have ever been passed because it doesn't apply to them and everyone should know it doesn't apply to them.

1710

Because Bill 8 does not apply to municipalities, if municipalities are enforcing and carrying out provincial offences legislation, the administration of those offences, we have to ensure that in that particular case the rights of francophones are protected. There is an issue around this. In Manitoba a few years ago there was a parking ticket issued to a person who was French-speaking, and that individual objected to receiving a parking ticket that was only in English. That matter was taken to the courts and it eventually went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court in that case, referring to the Manitoba Act, which is an act establishing the province of Manitoba, which protects the rights of francophones and is protected under the Constitution of Canada, said that no, this was not right, it was not proper.

In Ontario there is no similar act to protect the rights of francophones. There is no act in Ontario like the Manitoba Act that applies in that jurisdiction. All we have to protect the rights of francophones in this province to services in their own language is Bill 8, and Bill 8 does not apply to municipalities. It only applies to the

provincial government and to provincial agencies. That's why we think an amendment should be put in committee of the whole to ensure that the rights of francophones are protected.

We've indicated to the government House leader that we don't intend to prolong debate on that. We want to put the amendment. Unfortunately, the government members in the standing committee voted against a similar amendment in committee. We hope they've had time to reconsider and that the government will say that yes, it makes sense that the rights of francophones should be protected and that we should have an amendment to the Provincial Offences Act and so we should have the amendment passed. We want to give the opportunity to the members of the Assembly from all three parties to vote in favour of such an amendment.

We would like to see the government bring forward an amendment. It doesn't have to be a long debate. It could take us at most about an hour or two, and we've indicated that we'd be quite pleased to have committee of the whole debate and third reading debate on the same day, so it wouldn't prolong the process at all. It would just ensure that a very important linguistic minority in this province has its rights protected in a country which recognizes the bilingual nature of Canada.

Bill 127, the nurse practitioners bill: This is a very good bill. This is a bill, I've already indicated to the government House leader, that we support and I think it's supported on all sides of the House. As the government House leader said, this an important bill for health care in the province, particularly in small communities in rural and northern parts of the province where we may have a shortage of health care professionals and where nurse practitioners can carry out many of the tasks that in other cases might normally be done only by physicians. This is an alternative approach to health care.

We're quite prepared to have a very short debate. This issue has been around for a long time. Consideration of the legislation has been before the House before. We don't need to have any committee; we don't need any committee on Bill 127. It's favoured by the profession. It's favoured by most of the community in Ontario. Let's proceed. Let's get it through. Let's do it quickly. There has been no stalling on this legislation at all by anyone, so let's do it.

Bill 138 is another case in point. The government stalled this; they stalled it from February on. The minister initially put in what was called Bill 125, which dealt with flying truck wheels, and he didn't tell his House leader about it. I can remember the House leaders' meeting just after the minister had announced he was going to introduce the bill. Frankly, the government House leader was taken by surprise. I said, "When are you going to deal with this bill the Minister of Transportation is bringing forward on flying truck wheels?" and the government House leader was, to say the least, a little taken aback. He didn't know.

The minister went out saying, "We're going to proceed and we want to do it in a hurry," so both opposition parties encouraged him and said: "Yes, fine. We're prepared to deal with it. This is an important problem. It's one that must be dealt with. There have been too many accidents where people have been killed or injured.

We've got to deal with it." Then the government came up and said: "No, no. We need a comprehensive road safety bill." We don't disagree with that. There are a lot of issues related to road safety in the province that should be dealt with, not just the flying truck wheels.

The member for Essex-Kent, for instance, had a bill related to school bus safety. There have been a lot of issues. The member for Mississauga South and other members have raised issues about drunk driving in the province. There are lots of issues about road safety that should be dealt with. But it wasn't the opposition that in any way prevented the government from moving on this piece of legislation; it was the government itself.

The minister and others on the treasury benches have from time to time said, "There was a filibuster in this House around the governance of Metropolitan Toronto bill which prevented us from bringing forward Bill 125." What a lot of bunk. If the government had wanted to go forward on Bill 125, they just had to call it and we would have dealt with it, but instead they insisted on continuing to deal with the Metropolitan Toronto legislation. If they had wanted to do Bill 125, they could have, but they didn't, because they realized that Bill 125 itself was apparently too quickly thought out, ill thought out. It wasn't comprehensive enough; it didn't deal with the issue of road safety in a comprehensive enough way.

Now we have Bill 138 before us. It has gone to committee. We have facilitated the quick passage at second reading. There is only a short period of committee hearings and it will be back in the House by the end of the month, and we will be able to pass it. That is an indication of what we're able to do in this assembly when there is an important piece of legislation that responds to the needs of the community and there is cooperation among the parties. We do not need rule changes. We do not need changes in the standing orders to facilitate this kind of cooperation in passage of legislation that is important to the people of Ontario.

The government House leader also said he wanted to move forward on Bill 139, the Game and Fish Act changes. He wants second reading of that bill. Let's be fair on this one. The minister only introduced it at first reading a couple of days ago. It's a very extensive bill. It deals with a lot of different species and enforcement and protection. We have to caucus it. We have to determine how we're going to deal with it. I don't see that it's going to be controversial. I think most members, again, will be able to respond and accept the proposed changes as being important and useful in this province for all of us who are interested in conservation.

1720

There is a problem, a serious problem, I believe, that isn't directly in the legislation but relates to its implementation. There are a number of changes with regard to enforcement in the legislation, and that of course requires enforcement people to implement. The Ministry of Natural Resources has been decimated with cuts. It's at a point now where there isn't enough staff for the ministry to be able to do the job. That is well known across northern Ontario. Unfortunately it's too well known. That has led to the possibility of the minority of people who do not care about conservation and want to flout our game and fish regulations to poach.

I think what this government has done to the Ministry of Natural Resources is tragic. It's terrible, what it will mean for the future of our forestry resources, our fish and wildlife in this province. The Ministry of Natural Resources is just a shell of what it used to be. The staff there are overwhelmed. There aren't enough people and they can't do the job. While we may in fact support the changes under Bill 139, the new Game and Fish Act, we are very worried about whether or not it's going to mean anything to pass good regulations if they can't be enforced because there isn't enough staff.

The government House leader also pointed to Bill 129, budget bill number one, which has not yet been called by the government for second reading for some reason. He said it needs to be passed by the summer because it has some provisions that deal with trust companies, and that if the provisions aren't passed by the end of June, these trust companies may not be able to continue operating. The bill has a number of other provisions too, of course, but if it is that important and time-sensitive, why is it that we're almost at the end of June and the government has not yet called the bill? I don't understand it. In this case, if there is a problem, the government is the author of its own misfortune. My friend from St Catharines calls the section on trust companies a "hostage" part of the bill. It's a way of getting controversial legislation through by putting one provision in it that everybody knows must be passed quickly, so we pass the bill quickly and we don't deal with the other controversial measures, such as tax cuts, at a time when the government is concerned about the deficit.

I think there are a number of bills here that can be passed quickly and dealt with — I've pointed them out — in a spirit of cooperation because they're important to the people of Ontario. There are others here that are somewhat controversial and will take more time.

I want to deal with one serious problem that I've seen in this place over the last few years. I want to be fair and point out that this hasn't just been a problem under this government. It's been a problem under every government I've seen over the 22½ years I've had the privilege of serving the people of Algoma in this place. Governments always tend to bring in a big agenda and move very slowly in the first part of the session. Then at the end of the session they always want to have everything passed in a big rush. It doesn't seem to matter what the size of their majority is. As a matter of fact, it seems to a worse problem when it's a large majority. They can't manage the agenda of the House in a very efficient way. They always then try to blame the opposition and say, "It's the opposition's fault," no matter how small the opposition. No matter how few members there are in the opposition, the large majority says, "You know, we have all these things we have to get done and it's those members of the opposition who are holding everything up." I think this is more of a problem with this government than with other governments, but it's been a problem with all of them.

The problem I see that this government has is that they do not understand or appreciate the importance of this assembly. They seem to have the view that democracy simply works on the basis that every four years or so there's an election and the people decide who among the various parties should govern the province, and that is

democracy. Then, after the election is over, the government should just be allowed to govern and get its agenda through and then four years later go back to the electorate, put its record on the line, run against the other parties and see if they can get re-elected.

That forgets the importance of the assembly. There's no question that governments are elected and are given a mandate to carry through on the commitments they've made. But the assembly is made up of representatives of all the people of the province, and it is the responsibility of those representatives to scrutinize what the government is doing and to hold the government accountable. It is a particular role of the opposition in the assembly to ensure that the government is criticized and, when bad pieces of legislation are presented, to stop them if they can and to hold them up and amend them where necessary.

The problem with this government is that they see that as a nuisance. They don't want to have the opposition hold them up or slow them down; they just want everything to go through really quickly. There's a problem with that, because sometimes the most well-intentioned pieces of legislation, if they are passed quickly, can include within them serious problems that bring about effects that nobody anticipated and nobody wants. That's why it's important for the members of the assembly to scrutinize what the government is doing, to criticize what the government is doing, to move amendments, to slow them down when they think they're wrong and to try to get them to rethink their position. That's what democracy is about.

Winston Churchill once said, "The problem with democracy is that it's very inefficient," it's very messy. But he also said, "But it's the best system there is," and he was right. Sure, it's not as efficient. In a dictatorship, the dictator says, "This is the way it's going to be," and it happens — very efficient; you can do things very, very quickly. But we've seen the results of that kind of government too often in the world, and none of us in this assembly would desire that.

Sure, it takes longer when you have to debate and persuade. It takes longer when you actually ask the public what they think. When you inform them of what's going on, ask them their opinions, give them opportunities to come before committees, criticize and say, "This is what's good and this is what's bad," sure, that takes longer. Sometimes it's not very pleasant to hear their criticisms. Sometimes they are very vehement in their opposition to what the government believes should be done. This is not always pleasant. But it's democracy.

We can move forward with legislation that is important to the community in a spirit of goodwill and give-and-take in this assembly. But let me say clearly, if the government decides that speed and expediency are more important than ensuring proper debate, the government will rue the day and so will all the people of Ontario.

1730

We are in a system of government that actually establishes the role of an opposition. In most parts of the world, this is considered very odd, that a government would actually allow and encourage politicians who disagree with it to participate in the process and to criticize the government on a daily basis. In many, many cultures around the world, this is unheard of. It does slow

things down. It does, in some cases, make for what appears on the face of it to be inefficiencies. But in the long run we all benefit from it.

The government House leader has put forward a number of pieces of legislation that can be passed in this House and should be passed. The government House leader has also put forward a number of pieces of legislation that can and must be criticized and must be looked at very carefully, that will generate a great deal of debate both in this assembly and outside it.

There are also other matters that have to be brought before this House: concurrences, the Supply Act, the House calendar. They can be dealt with and should be dealt with. The government House leader just needs to call them, we'll debate them.

We call this place a provincial Parliament. We all know what the root of that word "Parliament" is: parlier, to talk. That's what this place is about. It's not just a Legislature, coming from the Latin word for law. We pass laws here but we also talk a great deal. Some might say talk is cheap. I would say talk is very, very important in our system of democracy. Debate is what this place is for. It is one of the great strengths of our system of government.

We've demonstrated today that when the government has measures that it wants to bring forward that are important to the province, they can be debated and can be dealt with in an efficient, expeditious manner. When the government brings forward controversial pieces of legislation, then the government must be prepared to debate them, and to persuade, and to inform, and to listen to what the opposition has to say and what the people have to say.

If this government is not prepared to do that and is determined to facilitate changes that will make it very difficult for the opposition to carry out its responsibilities under our parliamentary system, that will make it easy for the government to ram through pieces of legislation that are controversial without real debate, without real input from the public, and without having to listen to criticism and respond to it, then this government is going to have a real fight on its hands, not just in the assembly, but I think outside this place as well.

I've spent a lot of years here; I hope to spend a lot more, representing the people of my area. I've seen governments get frustrated and exasperated, governments of all stripes. But don't act in a rash manner that will change the process in a way that will harm the very system of government that we all hold dear. There are some quirky things about this place, but overall the system works. It works for the people of the province. I'm pleased to have been a part of that and to continue to be a part of it.

If the government would respond in the way it did to Waterloo's request for change in every instance, the government wouldn't have much difficulty getting legislation through this place. Frankly, the Waterloo bill could have passed long before this except the government didn't call it. We indicated as soon as it came forward that we'd pass it in one day.

Whatever the reasons for delay, be careful in any changes you propose.

Mr Gilchrist: It's indeed my pleasure to add a few comments to the debate here today on this important government motion, a motion which, to those who were listening much earlier this afternoon when the House leader outlined the intent, allows us the opportunity to in effect double the amount of time we spend in this chamber to debate the important issues that my colleague opposite just a moment ago expressed his interest in being involved in in a constructive way, and ensuring that the important problems we all face — and I'm sure the member opposite would agree with me in this statement, that there are problems in this province and that it's important for us to tackle those sooner rather than later.

We were elected with a mandate to do certain things. I believe a case can be made that we have honoured those commitments. The fact is, though, that time and the tides do not stand still. There have been new problems that have come to light, and clearly there are new legislative initiatives that are always required.

We have on the order paper right now 12 bills that have proceeded and are ready for third reading. We have another something like 79 bills ready to go for second reading. We have a number of other government bills that have been introduced and have not yet been debated in this House. Clearly there is a need for us to be processing these pieces of legislation in a timely fashion. I'm sure if the members' cooperation extends through these next two weeks, we'll see the ability to waive the normal rules that you can only process one bill each day and hopefully we'll be able to tackle things such as the red tape bills.

Those red tape bills alone, the first eight we introduced, seek to eliminate 1,500 fees and regulations. As the House leader alluded, some of these date back over 75 years. Talk about anachronistic, talk about redundant and out of date. The fact of the matter is, as part of our commitment to freeing the province, its taxpayers and its businesses, from the bureaucratic shackles that restrained business in this economy from 1985 till 1995, it's clearly incumbent upon us to have done the review we have done and now to proceed to the final step, which will be the elimination of these onerous and unnecessary regulations.

My colleague from Algoma mentioned a case in point, the changes we've brought to the Ministry of Natural Resources. It's true that ministry has seen a reduction in its workload. What may not be readily apparent to people who don't have a day-to-day involvement with that ministry is that as part of our business review we identified that 40,000 of the 45,000 permits MNR issues every year are absolutely superfluous. They're redundant, they're an absolute waste of time for both the clerk who processes them and the person coming to make an application.

I'll give you a case in point. Historically, if you owned a cottage on crown land, every year when you wanted to put your dock in in the spring you had to come to us to get a permit, and you'd pay your fee. We always approved it. Everybody got their permit. The fee that was charged didn't come close to the cost to the government of processing that application. In the first place, there's no sense having a licence if everybody gets it. Secondly, it makes no sense to the already overburdened taxpayers in this province to be losing money in the guise of non-regulation. As part of that review, clearly by identifying

this sort of unnecessary paperwork, the reality is that the MNR could reduce its staff.

But it's also interesting to note — and I see just in the clipping service today — that the MNR has to augment the existing firefighting crews. Over and above the 77 firefighting crews that already existed in the north, we have now gone to the private sector for backup firefighters and we have identified another 120 auxiliary firefighters who are available — they are on call at a moment's notice all throughout the north — to guarantee a timely and yet cost-effective ability to respond to fires.

1740

I'm sure the members opposite would agree with us that to have staff in any ministry sitting around with nothing to do is not in the best interests of the taxpayers, and in the case of something like fires, where obviously no one in this province wants to see them occur, and when they do occur we want to see them put out as fast as possible, it is appropriate for us to have a rapid response capability.

We think maintaining the existing 77 crews demonstrates that we aren't in any way undermining our commitment to fire safety in the north, but now we've gone one step better, and no one on the other side asked us to do this. It's in recognition of the fact that over and above whatever ability we have had to service the fires in the north, we need to go one better, and we have done that with 120 more firefighters, just one minor step in one ministry but part of a far broader agenda.

Members opposite realize, while much has been said by our colleague from Renfrew-Thesaurus earlier this afternoon, that there are still challenges in areas such as youth unemployment. The reality is that there too there is an opportunity for the members opposite to join with us in furthering our proposals for greater training, for greater skills development, for a greater ability for the universities and colleges and high schools to identify the areas of opportunity for youth, not after they have graduated, not for some remedial course, not a second or third degree because the first time they didn't hit the nail on the head. We all, the government and the schools and the parents and the students, share a responsibility to do the research and determine what the jobs are, not just today, but five, 10, 20, 50 years out.

It was somewhat ironic. The member indicated that he graduated from my alma mater one year after I did, and he had a job. He had a choice of jobs in fact when he graduated. That was certainly indicative of the times in the early 1970s. Just last week I received a letter from the principal of the same university, and the principal of Queen's indicated that 91% of the graduating class of the first MBA program to go through the new regime had a job before they graduated, and at salaries ranging from \$60,000 to \$120,000 a year.

For a 25- or 26-year-old graduating with their master's degree, that's not a bad starting salary. I don't think anyone in this House, in this province would suggest that, even at the low end of that scale, those individuals have not set themselves up, thanks to the education system in the province of Ontario, for a tremendous future. We, in turn, will benefit from the skills they acquire, will benefit from their ability to contribute to the growth and development in this province.

It's certainly important to recognize that we have a long way to go, but in the very statistics the member opposite quoted, those who only have some high school — not those who graduated from high school, some who only had a year or two of high school — there's 23% unemployment, but for those who had even gone through community colleges, it's closer to 12%. Again, where is the responsibility for the students and the parents and yes, the government to ensure that facility is there, the dollars are there to make sure every student in Ontario has an opportunity to get that college education, because as we all know, in an increasingly technological-driven world, there are no \$60,000-a-year hamburger-flipping jobs. Those jobs and that paycheque will be found in tool and die mechanic jobs and by those who become class A mechanics.

Mr Bradley: At Canadian Tire?

Mr Gilchrist: Yes, at Canadian Tire or at any other equally fine facility across the province. The reality is that there is great honour in doing those jobs, no less so than becoming an engineer, an MD or a dentist. It's incumbent upon all of us to break that stigma, to encourage people to go out and seek jobs where Ontario has a crying demand today. Just last Friday, Nortel in Ottawa indicated that they were going to be hiring 5,000 more people — one announcement, one company, 5,000 more employees. You can rest assured these are not going to be minimum wage jobs. You can rest assured they will not be looking for people who only have grade 9 or 10. You can rest assured they probably will have trouble finding enough graduates to meet the demands of such a high-tech industry as they have.

The same is true here in Toronto, where any number of pharmaceutical companies are undergoing expansions. One in particular that I happened to visit a couple of weeks ago tells me they have an immediate demand for 600 employees, but these are bachelor of science, master of science and PhD in pharmacology. Quite frankly, there aren't enough graduates.

Small wonder we have constrained the growth in this province for the last number of years when we couldn't even meet the demand that did come to our shores, and that was in the context of an overtaxed, overregulated, governmentally depressed environment. Those who fought their way through that morass, who fought their way through that swamp, still faced the challenge of not being able to find enough qualified individuals to fill their workforce. We all share the responsibility of making sure that is a thing of the past.

One of the members opposite commented about the challenges in areas such as health care. There's another opportunity for us to employ higher-tech approaches to the practice of medicine. Our government has bought I believe 23 magnetic resonance imaging machines so far. These \$5-million diagnostic machines all require a far higher degree of skill among those who are operating them. The bottom line is that we have to make sure that as these new tools are available to us we have the people trained to operate them in order to exploit their full potential and to make sure the patients in Ontario have access to a health care system that is second to none.

As the members opposite know full well, we were elected with a commitment to spend \$17.4 billion on

health. I'm very proud that two budgets later, with two successive increases in their budget, we are now spending \$18.5 billion in health, a far cry from a certain other party which committed to spending \$17 billion. The bottom line is I haven't heard them identify in the debate today or previously what part of health care they would cut by \$1.5 billion to meet their promise to the taxpayers.

We have the opportunity in these next two weeks to debate these important issues and many more. Earlier today we had a bill — and I expressed my gratitude to the members opposite for their assistance in ensuring that the city of Waterloo bill passed quickly. That downsized their council by four members, increased the access to the electors, created a direct democracy with the ability to elect directly a chairperson. I'm grateful that they assisted in that restructuring proposal.

As the Speaker is probably aware, that's I believe the 69th proposal that has gone through successfully, that has resulted in close to 140 municipalities voluntarily being reduced, downsizing the number of politicians by almost 600. In fact, by the time all the proposals are processed, we expect almost 1,000 fewer municipal politicians.

Clearly the case can be made that we can do better with less. We are doing it here at Queen's Park, all the members. All the members' budgets were trimmed in the first year. Our spending by party, our spending by member, our spending in the whole Legislature was trimmed dramatically, far more than we've asked any municipality to reduce their own budget. It's important that we recognize, as we recognize the fact that the taxpayers only have one pocket from whence tax dollars flow, that the municipalities have a role to play in the belt-tightening we have to do in this very short time period before we reach the balanced budget to which we committed, before we reach the point at which we can reappraise all the issues before us and we can make sure —

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, and increase the debt by another \$20 billion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): The member for Kingston and The Islands, order, please.

Mr Gilchrist: — most important, that we can make a dent in the debt that has built up in the last decade in particular, that we can downsize that burden that right now is costing the taxpayers of Ontario more money to service than what is spent on education. It's costing one half of what is spent on health care. I think it's obvious to every Ontarian the opportunities that would exist if we had those dollars to spend on real programs, not on debt service for past excesses.

1750

Clearly we've had some important initiatives come through this session. It has already been a record-setting spring in terms of the number of days we've sat. It is certainly record-setting in the number of hours we've sat, thanks to our 24-hour-a-day session a little earlier. This motion allows us the opportunity to cap off that productive spring session with double sitting days, in effect, for the next two weeks.

We have a number of other bills before us. We still have a number of challenges. It's very important that we tackle some of these private members' bills. Yes, I'm very pleased to say that I have two private member's bills, but there are also bills from members opposite in

the Liberal Party and the NDP that I personally have no problem supporting. I'm as frustrated as they are that we have not had the opportunity.

As the House leaders for the other two parties know full well, they are as much in control of the agenda in this House as our House leader and they know the number of days they can commit to a specific piece of legislation. It will take their cooperation to ensure that the bills from all sides of this House — and I would expect it to be from all sides of this House. It is up to them to ensure that in these next two weeks we have the ability to make sure the bills that were prepared by their members, in their fervent belief that they have something to contribute to the improvement of Ontario, that they have something to contribute to rectifying the problems we all inherited on June 8, 1995 — I call upon them to assist our House leader in making sure we put together an agenda over the next two weeks that deals with as many of these bills as possible.

The bottom line, and I'm sure this is a goal shared by all of our colleagues opposite as well as all of my colleagues on this side of the House, is that it is incumbent upon all of us to work tirelessly, even if it means until midnight, to make sure that Ontario has every opportunity, that we have all the tools at our disposal to once again guarantee that Ontario takes its rightful place as the engine pulling the rest of Confederation.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, and I add my support for this motion today.

Mr Bradley: I'm happy to support the motion. We indicated earlier we would be supporting this motion, which we believe is necessary at this time of year, just as it's necessary close to Christmas, to clear up the agenda of the government where there is some agreement that bills shall pass. Some of the bills are bills with which we in the opposition will vehemently disagree, but there has been considerable debate on some of that legislation and we're at third reading on some of it. It seems reasonable to me that having debated it, having placed the case before the public, now the time will be coming for voting on some of this legislation. We're delighted to have the House sit for extended hours so we're able to do so.

This is the way the House has worked amicably before. The House leaders sit down from time to time to discuss the agenda. We often wonder why the government doesn't bring certain legislation forward. I'm sure some of my friends in the government caucus wonder why certain bills are brought forward and other bills aren't brought forward at certain times, because we think some of those bills could pass rather quickly.

When I suggested this afternoon, along with Bud Wildman, the member for Algoma and the House leader for the NDP, that we deal with both this motion and the Waterloo bill this afternoon, there was a little bit of surprise, but it seemed sensible to do that. There's complete agreement on that bill, so why would you hold it up? The government wasn't going to call it, but we said: "Call it. Let's deal with that kind of legislation where all of us agree." There was a relatively short debate and we dealt with it rather expeditiously because there was a consensus and agreement. We have no suggestion that would not be productive in this regard. All of our suggestions are quite productive.

Because we're allowed to do so in a wide-ranging debate, with the indulgence of the House, I simply want to extend a little more of my comments on the passing of our former mayor, Joe McCaffrey, in St Catharines. I had an opportunity this afternoon during statements to pay tribute to Mr McCaffrey.

Many of you may have met him somewhere along the way. He was a genuine character, a very much beloved individual in St Catharines, a real Irishman who wore green all the time. He had a green tie, green suits and green everything from time to time. He even had the chain of office of the mayor of St Catharines changed from a dark red to green to reflect his Irish ancestry.

Joe McCaffery passed away today after a lengthy battle with cancer, but had made an outstanding contribution to St Catharines in many ways.

I know some of the ministers along the way, or opposition members they might have been at that time, would have met Joe and seen his unbridled enthusiasm for St Catharines. He would get up at the beginning of a speech, when he was bringing greetings, and list what St Catharines was the capital of. He would start off by saying it was the rowing capital of the world, and he'd say it's the recycling capital of the universe and the garden city of Canada. He had a number of promotional comments he would make about the city of St Catharines.

He was kind enough, in the last provincial election, though I think people of all political parties —

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, we'd be happy to send your remarks related to the mayor to the family. But might I ask you if you'd address the issue at hand. It's the motion put forward by the government House leader.

Mr Bradley: I know that Mayor McCaffery would want me, were he with us today, to say that this is a reasonable motion. He would want me to say as well that he was a very grass-roots politician, so he would understand this very well. He was a person, and this is something we all admire in political representatives, who never forgot the people who put him there, never wanted to run with what you would call the in crowd or the rich and the wonderful, whatever that crowd happens to be — the "jet set" is I guess the term we'd use. He was a very down-to-earth person, just as we need in this assembly from time to time: someone who could break the ice, someone who could inject humour just at the right time. That was our Mayor Joe McCaffery.

Mr Speaker, I know you and all the members of the House would want, as an extended family, to extend to his wife and his immediate family and to all his friends and to the people of St Catharines our greatest sympathy, our heartfelt sympathy. We will certainly miss Joe McCaffery, but none of us in the city of St Catharines and nobody who ever met him will ever forget Joe McCaffery.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? I believe that by mutual consent we put the question today.

The government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

It being 6 of the clock, the House will adjourn until tomorrow morning at 10 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1758.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
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Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		
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Perth Peterborough Port Arthur	Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) Gravelle, Michael (L)	Sudbury Sudbury East / -Est Timiskaming Victoria-Haliburton	Bartolucci, Rick (L) Martel, Shelley (ND) Ramsay, David (L) Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) Fox, Gary (PC)		Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail Kormos, Peter (ND) Amott, Ted (PC) Doyle, Ed (PC) Skarica, Toni (PC) Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 12 June 1997

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 12 juin 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 12 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 12 juin 1997

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR UNE TOLÉRANCE ZÉRO EN MATIÈRE D'ABUS DE SUBSTANCES

Mr Young moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to promote zero tolerance for substance abuse by children / Projet de loi 134, Loi encourageant une tolérance zéro concernant l'abus de substances par des enfants.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): The 1990s have been earmarked as the decade of the rebirth of the drug culture. More and more young people, some as young as 12 years old, are fearlessly joining the trend. Substance abuse by youth is at its highest level since 1980. Today, drugs are far more potent than they were in the 1960s and most are readily available to our youth. But young people just aren't getting the message that drugs and alcohol can be deadly and addictive toxins.

As a society, we haven't fully acknowledged this reality. The apathy we've allowed ourselves to cultivate over the last two years has created a blind spot that has rendered us unable or unwilling to accept the fact that substance abuse among our youth is skyrocketing. The costs to our society, both human and financial, are devastating, but we are a society in denial.

The reality is that almost 20% of grade 9 students and almost 41% of grade 11 students smoked cannabis in 1995. This is hydroponic marijuana or its derivatives, 20 to 30 times as strong as that which students experimented with in the 1970s — mind-numbing dope. Almost one in five grade 11 students had tried LSD, which produces bizarre hallucinations for up to eight hours, flashbacks and sometimes screaming fits. The statistics related to alcohol use among students are even more staggering. Thirty per cent of grade 7 students aged 12 and almost 76% of grade 11 students aged 16 had consumed alcohol. Yet less than 2% of parents believe children use drugs too often.

The drug culture is flourishing in our backyards. Our children are gathering for bush parties where they drink and take drugs in neighbourhood parks and ravines. Forty-four per cent of our youth have witnessed drinking and driving. Thousands of our children are cramming themselves into overcrowded abandoned buildings for rave parties where dangerous herbal and chemical drugs like ecstasy and speed are pedalled to them at tables right out in the open. I have witnessed this myself. The

marketing is insidious. They use names like "rush," "acceleration" and "giggle juice." Is life a little tough? Buy a new reality. The giggles were over for one US teenager last year who died after taking herbal ecstasy.

We are abandoning our children. We owe it to them to open our eyes to what's going on. My bill will help us achieve that. We can't rely on the media to do our parenting for us. Many youth already identify with the Kurt Cobains of the world. Open any American fashion magazine and you'll likely see images of stoned, stringy-haired addicts staring from the pages in a shameless attempt to sell our children clothing.

Nor should we place responsibility for our children solely on the shoulders of our educators or law enforcement officers. If passed, my bill will reduce their role by compelling the participation of a group which has sometimes been excluded in the past: the parents. I am told by the experts that the major roadblock to reducing substance abuse is in fact parental denial. We need parents to be part of the solution to substance abuse among our children. My bill will, by law, require parents to intervene at the first sign of suspected drug or alcohol use by their child when alerted by the school. With the help of a social worker or a guidance counsellor, both parent and child will get the information they need to get help in their community and develop a plan to deal with the problem.

If passed into law, my bill will also ensure zero tolerance for the possession of tobacco on school property, resulting in the immediate suspension of the offending students. In 1995, 10% of students in grade 7 were smokers. By grade 11, that number jumped to 42%. We know smoking is addictive, sometimes after only one cigarette, and usually lifetime smokers start in their teens. The tobacco companies certainly know that.

It is also a killer. In 1992 in Ontario, there were approximately 13,700 deaths attributable to smoking; 40,000 deaths a year in Canada are due to tobacco use. In Ontario, young people under 19 are prohibited from purchasing cigarettes and smoking on school property is illegal. Yet we still allow students to bring tobacco on to school property and offer it to their friends. My bill eliminates this inconsistency.

I mentioned that there are devastating social costs involved with substance abuse. Allow me to elaborate. There are terrible, terrible costs to health, including the threat of dependency, addiction and the long-term effects of drug and alcohol abuse. There are costs to our children's education as well. The performance of substance users declines, sometimes permanently.

Most tragically, there is the cost of human lives lost due to drug overdoses and drug- and alcohol-related accidents, including motor vehicle accidents. In 1992,

there were approximately 6,840 deaths attributable to alcohol in Ontario.

And there are costs to the rest of society. Police tell us drugs and alcohol play a role in most crime. Many or most home break-ins are drug-related. Many or most physical assaults occur under the influence. Most gang activity centres around drug use and the drug culture. Most murders are committed by people under the influence.

Canadians spend billions of dollars each year treating addicts and cleaning up the mess many of them create through crime, car accidents, court and incarceration costs. In 1992 the federal government launched a five-year, multimillion-dollar commitment to deal with substance abuse, to cover related programs, including medical and corrections. However, no clear national strategy is in place to deal with the growing problem of substance abuse among our youth.

One day, our children's children will look back and ask us, "Why did you let that happen?" There is no good answer. In Ontario we must set the standard of public tolerance. We must send a message, loud and clear, to our youth and their parents that the use of narcotics and alcohol is a grave danger in our homes, in our schools, in our province and in our country. I am asking your support for this critical initiative.

1010

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise to speak against the bill. One may find that peculiar, since I've been a teacher and a principal for 30 years, but let me tell you why: The bill, as proposed, is not manageable. The bill, as proposed, has so many flaws that it will only hurt children or young adults in the long term, because the bill is punitive in nature.

Although the discipline strand in any exercise is important, it is far more important that we deal with the intervention and prevention components of any substance abuse policy, and this is where the bill is lacking. There is absolutely nowhere in this bill where you spend time or focus your energies on ensuring (1) that prevention takes place and (2) that meaningful intervention takes place. It is hardly meaningful to be fining teachers and principals and to be punishing parents. That is not productive; that is counterproductive to the process. It does nothing to help children or students in Ontario's school system.

I find it ironic that the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education would propose a bill like this without consulting the stakeholders — without consulting students, without consulting teachers, without consulting boards — because it is very important for him to realize that most boards in Ontario have very good substance abuse programs in place. Certainly this right-wing approach, this punitive approach of this government is beyond belief when it comes to trying to prevent a problem that exists in schools. This bill does not realize the importance that any good substance abuse program has when it comes to individually helping those students with problems.

Our pages — they are in grades 7 and 8 — will attest to the fact that children come to school with many different and diverse backgrounds and many different and

diverse needs. This one-size-fits-all approach will absolutely not work but will cause bigger problems, bigger delays in what is and should be the most important part of any program, and that's prevention and intervention. This bill simply doesn't address those two very important components of any workable, manageable and sustainable substance abuse program. The big-stick approach just doesn't work with children. The big-stick approach gives you negative results and not positive results. When we're dealing with children, specific problems with students, we should always be looking to a positive resolution and a positive course of action as opposed to a negative course of action.

So I find it surprising, I find it almost unbelievable that the stakeholders weren't involved in the process, and I find it impossible that the gentleman doesn't realize that confidentiality between teacher and student to help a child is very important. It isn't addressed in the bill. Therefore, a student would not feel comfortable going to a teacher with a problem, because if the teacher doesn't then divulge the confidentiality that has been built between the teacher and the student, the teacher is fined, the principal is fined, the parents are fined and ultimately, and finally the student is fined. I'm sorry, it just doesn't make any sense and I would ask the House not to support it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I'm pleased to participate in this debate —

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: — and I'm pleased to address the bill, if Mr Young will permit me. I'm going to tell you, recognizing that second reading is approval in principle, I have some great concerns about the bill, not about the principle.

All of us should endorse the proposition that schools should be healthy places. If schools are infiltrated by tobacco, which we all have to consider to be a highly addictive and very dangerous drug and, let's make no mistake about it, one from which great profits are made, with total disregard for the welfare of the users, the addicts, by an industry which has increasingly, recognizing that older persons are becoming increasingly sensitive to the health dangers of tobacco, older persons are increasingly inclined to make efforts to break the habit, seen, as I've read and understand from any number of studies, dramatic increases of tobacco use, smoking, on the part of youngsters, especially young women, I think that should be of considerable concern to all of us.

I'll be quite candid: I say this as a person who has quit smoking for considerable periods of time, who understands the addiction and who has returned to the habit, understanding how tenuous a period of abstinence is, even periods as long as three and four years. Like most other smokers, I concede readily that my introduction to tobacco was as a young person — and there was nothing unique or special about my circumstances — compelled to engage in the habit for all the same reasons that young people are in 1997.

I think it's important that the Legislature address this issue. I am proud of the legislation of the last government which made significant strides to control the access of young people to tobacco. Perhaps it's time for govern-

ments — and provincial governments alone can't do it. We were sorely disappointed by the failure of the federal government prior to the last election to be as tough and firm in its anti-tobacco legislation as it stated it was going to be. They backed off under the pressure of a very powerful lobby, and that is very specifically the tobacco industry.

The tobacco industry has a strong interest in creating new addicts, because there's a whole lot of money at stake. Let's be clear: The tobacco industry doesn't make money from people who smoke two, three or four cigarettes a day; the tobacco industry relies upon addicts in much the same way — and I'll move on to spirits and alcohol — that the alcohol beverage industry doesn't rely upon the family that keeps a bottle of Seagram's VO in their den closet for years at a time, perhaps serving it up at Christmastime or celebrations. The beer industry doesn't make profits from people who drink one beer a week. The alcohol industry requires that there be mass consumption on the part of significant numbers of people. Once again, just as the tobacco industry has targeted young people in a not very subtle way, in my view, it's my firm belief, based upon what we've experienced in this province for a considerable period of time, that the alcohol industry similarly targets young people.

Witness, for instance, the ongoing experiments with making what are referred to as soda pop beverages — soda pop wines, coolers, those sorts of things. They're designed for the tyro consumer. They're sweetened, they're sugary and they're more akin to Kool-Aid than they are to the taste of hard liquor. Those are desperate efforts on the part of the industry to seduce young people into beginning alcohol consumption.

I endorse the principle of the bill to this extent: I'm eager to see this bill or any other of a similar ilk go to committee. What I would call upon is for there to be broad and extensive hearings on the part of the committee. This isn't the sort of bill that should be dealt with in a period of but a few weeks, because I'm convinced that this bill in itself is not the solution.

1020

Quite frankly, I think it's nuts to suggest that a student who commits an infraction be suspended from school for a period of up to 20 days. That's the last thing in the world — I concur with the principle of suspension, but my view is that a suspension should only be imposed to protect the health and safety of other students. It seems to me to be avoiding the issue to merely suspend the student.

The prospect of imposing fines — in the case of the bill, fines of up to \$200 — against a student who fails to comply with the provisions of the bill, quite frankly, is nuts; it doesn't begin to address the issue. The reality is that most young people won't be able to find that type of money to pay a fine. We're not looking for a system which merely permits people to be licensed, to buy their way out of scenarios where they find themselves in difficulty.

I find the arguments of Mr Bartolucci persuasive. My own work prior to being elected here has involved a great deal of work with counselling and drug and alcohol and other substance abuse programs.

I question how effective the bill is going to be when we see the process that's being engaged in now, with larger and larger class sizes, with serious concerns about underfunding of school programs, with guidance counsellors who can't do guidance counselling but are forced into classroom teaching because of shortages of staff. It's imperative that any legislation that addresses this problem and that calls upon counsellors, professionals within the school system, to respond to these situations, it's imperative that the bill has to consider whether those personnel are going to be available, whether the school is going to be adequately staffed.

My impression, from speaking with people in the teaching profession, is that they already feel, and rightly so, beleaguered by the number of additional responsibilities put on them. They don't dispute the need for somebody to embrace these responsibilities, but they have great concerns about the capacity of teachers, in the position they're in now, to respond to these responsibilities in an appropriate and professional manner.

It's clearly important to acknowledge that young people experiment with any number of taboo items. That's probably the nature of the beast. I'm prepared to concur that when a young person or a child attends school under the influence, it has gone beyond mere experimentation, and that is probably some pretty strong indicia of there being a problem or at least the beginning of a problem. That's with respect to alcohol or other drugs like the ones mentioned by the sponsor of this bill or tobacco.

It would be interesting to have this bill go to committee. I reject the proposition of imposing fines. That doesn't address the issue. I reject the proposition of the automatic suspension, because that doesn't address the issue. If schools are going to be built into healthier and healthier places, it's important that young people who are experiencing difficulties with, among other things, substance abuse have more and more access to healthy places rather than being ousted, rather than being ejected and put into positions where they can't receive the advice and counsel of teachers or peers.

I want to remark on programs that I'm familiar with down in Niagara region. Recently I was honoured to be, for instance, the reviewing officer for the Thorold air cadet squadron. My familiarity with the Thorold air cadet squadron and the Welland air cadet squadron — and I appreciate it's not a provincial government responsibility in terms of funding of those programs; it's one that falls to the federal government. But these programs are increasingly under threat because of the lack of funding. Programs like the air cadet program or sea cadet or army cadet programs — and I just use these as illustrations, because they're not every young person's cup of tea. I understand that, the people who operate these programs understand that and the young people involved in these programs understand it.

When we see municipalities with withering recreation programs because of the inability to finance them, when we see municipalities, however trivial it may seem in the context of this broad issue of substance abuse by young people, not just shutting down recreation programs, sports programs, but shutting down, for instance, public swim-

ming pools, as municipalities are doing across the province because of their inability to finance the repairs and maintenance of these swimming pools, quite frankly we're going to see more and more young people drifting to the margins and becoming increasingly lured by the prospect of the relief or release that at least they believe they can obtain by virtue of substance abuse.

I think it's important that we get tough with the tobacco and spirits industries. The spirits industry has been very clever in many respects, malicious and insidious, about how they weave their way around advertising guidelines which they insist be self-imposed. They are strong advocates of self-regulation. They insist they have the capacity to regulate themselves, but the advertising in some of the most powerful media, obviously, like television, like the big screen, like the sponsorship of youth-oriented events, rock concerts, the ilk of those, illustrates that they've targeted a market and have every intention of pettifogging their way through any regulations that might be imposed on them. I think it's time to get tough on the spirits industry, it's time to get tough on the tobacco industry and stop treating the attack on tobacco as something that somehow sits on the back burner.

The sponsor of the bill made reference to identification with Kurt Cobain, whose music I've never heard.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Oh, come on. You haven't heard it? Oh, you haven't lived.

Mr Kormos: Well, I haven't, but I'm well aware of the circumstances surrounding his career and the fascination that young people have with him. I regret to say to the author of the bill and to the other members here that I think I understand why increasing numbers of young people identify with Kurt Cobain. There's a great level of despair out there among young people. Sociologists call it anomie.

Young people are confronted by levels of unemployment that are well into the double digits, in the Niagara region approaching 19% and 20%. That's not unique to Niagara. Youth unemployment doubles that of their parents virtually across the province and across the country. Young people are increasingly concerned about what future will be there for them. Young people are feeling incredible pressure about whether they'll be able to afford post-secondary education and, even if they and their families make the incredible sacrifice necessary to achieve it, whether there will be jobs and careers for them at the end of the day.

Surely this has to be recognized as part of the process which draws people into substance abuse: families in poverty. I think we have to understand that families in poverty and young people suffering that poverty, certainly through no fault of their own, find themselves in states of despair and detachment. Again, I understand part of the Kurt Cobain phenomenon to be an expression of that despair and detachment and that identification of what is called generation X. When we see the numbers of young people who populate the streets, not just of Toronto but increasingly of communities across the province, as homeless people, kids who resort to squeegeeing to eke their way through a day and then a week and then months, surely we've got to understand that the response to substance abuse is more than just fines and suspensions from school.

I'm prepared to participate in committee hearings. I think there's a whole lot of people in the community across this province — experts, laypeople, parents, teachers, young people — who would be eager to participate as well. It's for that reason, and the eagerness to see this discussed and debated in the broadest possible way that I will be supporting this bill this morning.

1030

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Today we are debating the private member's bill put forward by the honourable member for Halton Centre, the Zero Tolerance for Substance Abuse Act. I'd like to applaud the member on his efforts in trying to eradicate the use of drugs and alcohol and tobacco among our children and rid these substances from their presence in schools across Ontario. These are values I share as well. However, there are several areas of the bill that I feel require clarification and may prove to be unenforceable if passed in its present form.

The bill establishes several different offences but does not indicate that these offences are under the Provincial Offences Act. If it is the intention for these offences to be under that act, then this needs to be clearly set out in the bill. If, however, these are to be offences under the Education Act, there are no mechanisms in the act for procedures of enforcement, so that would need to be addressed.

There are several sections of the bill that amend portions of the Education Act which I believe may not be necessary, such as an amendment to require a principal of the school to hold informational meetings if there are grounds to believe that a student is impaired, in possession of a substance or supplies a substance to another person. This is already covered under the drug education policy framework issued by the Ministry of Education and Training. This has assisted school boards in the development and implementation of drug education policies throughout Ontario.

Drug education is an area of study in the physical and health education curriculum guidelines for grades 1 to 12. The focus is on education about tobacco in grades 4 to 10 and about alcohol, cannabis and cocaine in grades 7 to 10. I believe this is a very important point, that our government has ensured that drug education, remain part of the current curriculum, and when the new curriculum is developed for physical and health education I'm confident that drug education will remain a key element in this new document.

Another concern is that this bill may put our teachers and principals in a very difficult position. Under the proposed bill, the principal is required to hold a meeting with the pupil's guardian before there is a trial or a conviction of the student. This may actually require the principal to act in a quasi-judicial manner. The bill also creates offences for teachers who fail to attend the informational meeting. I believe this bill could expand the role of the educator to that of enforcer, an expanded role that many within the educational community will not be comfortable with.

One of the most important roles of the decision-maker, whether it be a president of a company, a judge or a principal, is the ability to exercise discretion when

needed. I believe the bill limits the principal from exercising that discretion. The requirements made on the principal to suspend a student in possession of tobacco, whether lighted or not, eliminates the ability for the principal to exercise discretion. A key function of a principal is the ability to exercise that discretion and make appropriate decisions based on circumstances. Exceptional situations occur in many facets of life, and I believe our public policies must reflect that.

I believe the spirit of the bill introduced by my colleague is well intentioned in helping to eradicate the use of drugs among our young people. If the bill is passed and goes to committee, I would strongly recommend that teachers, principals, parents and community members have the chance to give their input to ensure that the bill accomplishes its objectives.

Mr Gerretsen: I concur with what the member opposite has just stated. He stated many of the reasons I'm against this bill at this stage. When you send this kind of bill to committee, it's highly unlikely that enough changes will be made to accomplish the kind of thing and to deal with the kinds of issues he's talking about.

I'd like to talk about something else, though, very briefly, because we have two other caucus members who want to speak on this as well. The member for Halton Centre talked about a national strategy. Surely, if we're talking about a national strategy of making sure our youngsters don't have access to these substances, it's a matter for the provincial and federal governments to start working together better. They should go after the alcohol industry, the spirits and tobacco industries, to a much greater extent than they have.

I know why governments haven't done it. Quite frankly, there's an awful lot of tax revenue riding on the sale of these items. If our federal government and our provincial government really and truly made this a priority, I think we could handle these kinds of problems and situations. But to start blaming the youngsters for these problems when at the same time advertising is placed on a day-to-day basis in all the media glorifying the use of alcohol and tobacco, how can we possibly expect the youngsters in our society to get the right kind of attitude towards the use of these products?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): The Liberal government, Allan Rock.

Mr Gerretsen: Just a minute now, folks. How can we possibly expect them to do that if —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): They're hopeless over there.

Mr Gerretsen: They sure are. I agree. They're hopeless.

The governments could deal with these issues by at least making darned sure that laws are in effect so that the youngsters will have as little access to these products as possible. That's where it has to start. We can't glorify this kind of situation.

Mr Hastings: I'm glad to join in this debate regarding the submission of the member for Halton Centre on his private member's bill dealing with substance abuse.

I want to concentrate on the consequences of the rampant substance abuse we see in our society. One of those consequences, the demoralizing of our children,

must be stopped. Substance abuse not only hurts the individual, it rips apart the lives of friends and families. More often, the physical and emotional short-term effects of substance abuse lead these young offenders to a life of long-term pain for which our society is paying enormously. Their habits result in a compromised education, perhaps leading to crime and in some instances even to death. We need to get into the minds of our youth and somehow play an integral role in determining how to deter substance abuse.

The citizens of Ontario have ended up paying enormous amounts of money caring for these offenders. When they're sitting in a hospital with brain haemorrhaging, lung cancer, kidney and liver cancer or malnutrition, who pays for it? All of us. Most important, as a society we can never re-create their potential.

We have to ensure that our youth realize they are not invincible, and we must hit them where it hurts. If a youth is convicted of substance abuse, we must step up to the plate and intervene, holding them back from the things they like to do most. Let's make them wait another year before they can obtain a driver's licence or enter a club. I believe these are creative and effective deterrents for our young people. We must make it clear to our youth that they can lose the privileges that come with growing up and becoming mature in today's society. Substance abuse starts in the schools, where kids are learning how to cope with today's pressures. They're using it as a tool to deal with that kind of pressure. But I think it's important that our children understand that taking drugs or drinking alcohol, even moderately, is against the law. Alcohol is a poison that hurts the heart and irreparably destroys young minds. Tobacco is one of the cheapest forms of addictive substances available for adults over age 19 years.

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Children must realize that if they are found smoking in our schools, they must be punished — imagine. We need to bring back some enforcement along with complementary drug awareness and prevention programs. Children must realize that if they are found in possession of an illegal substance, no matter what the age, they will be severely punished and, foremost, young people must realize they will now be stripped of the privileges they value most if they are found abusing a substance of any form.

Finally, I'd like to say that these children who spend their parents' money to skip school, poison their bodies with alcohol, destroy their brains with drugs and damage the integrity and love of their families must be punished. Kids' responsibility results in an ongoing process of wasting resources to treat our young people, who understand that punishment exists but fail to respect today's judicial laws.

This categorically could not be any worse than seeing a loved one in the hospital suffering from an incurable but avoidable ailing disease or sickness. Kids have the conscious choice of patiently waiting until the age of individual consent, or they can choose to break the law and face the consequences. That's a reality we ought to be dealing with today. As a society, we must draw the line and state that there are certain things this society will no longer tolerate.

Today I'm pleased to join in supporting the member for Halton Centre's bill on substance abuse and I clearly disagree with the parliamentary assistant's position. It seems to me that we have had for the last 25 to 30 years a large dose of drug awareness education. In fact I'm supportive of a program called DARE, Drug Awareness Reduced Everywhere, in my own riding that originates in California and Edmonton, taught by police officers. It's found to have the most sticking, bonding consequences in terms of having our young people understand what happens when they engage in drug and substance abuse.

It seems to me that you have to have the combination of strict enforcement and drug awareness education and counselling, whereas our members opposite seem to want to emphasize the continuing ironic status quo and forget the enforcement concept completely, just continue with drug awareness education.

If it were working so effectively, then the question the member for Halton Centre posed has still not been answered by members of either of the opposition parties. If those two approaches are the most effective, then why do we have a mounting problem? That's the *raison d'être* for his bill, and I congratulate him for bringing it forward and showing that we need to combine drug awareness education and prevention with strong enforcement. I'd like to congratulate the member for Halton Centre for introducing this bill today.

Mr Bradley: I want to first of all say that I understand the problem that exists and that I believe the member is very sincere in wanting to address what is a problem that troubles so many of us in our society. I'm sure it is a problem that makes many parents lose a lot of sleep. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale pointed out the impact on our society of drug abuse that takes place. All of us are frustrated when we see in our society a problem which is sometimes growing, sometimes abating only a little bit with young people in our society. We have to find ways to address the problem.

The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education indicated that he felt the bill would be difficult to enforce, and that is my problem with it. I spoke to the member for Halton Centre about his bill and thought initially that it would have some positive impact. I think we want to see restrictions on the ability to use substances within the school system, for instance, and in other places. I looked at the bill and said I don't think it's an enforceable bill, even though the goal is good.

I think drug education is absolutely essential — it's not the only component you can use — and I believe you have to get at the people who are purveying the drugs, except that here we're in a case where we have legal drugs for older people, that is, alcohol and tobacco, being referred to. If you're talking about cocaine, heroin or whatever other drugs there are out there, and there is a variety of drugs that are illegal, I think you look at that in a different way.

What you're doing is placing a tremendous onus on people within the education system, people who are already occupied with an awful lot of other things that they have to do within education. Also, you're putting greater onus on the enforcement system. This government has made a decision, rightly or wrongly, that it is going

to attack things by severely reducing expenditures within the government, and there are some people who agree with that. I don't agree with it, but I'm not being critical of that aspect today. I'm simply saying that with all these problems, if you're not prepared to commit the resources to them, then you're not going to be able to enforce laws no matter how tough they are.

I think the problem is appropriately brought to the attention of this House and I want to find ways, along with other members, of dealing particularly with those substances which are considered to be illegal within our society and those substances which are illegal for young people to have.

I don't know if this will solve it, looking at the details of the bill. I really think you're going to place principals and teachers in an extremely difficult situation. You're assuming that in all families we have somewhat of the old-fashioned and what a lot of people would consider to be normal families, a nuclear family where you have a husband, a wife and other children and there is some enforcement at home. There are many more dysfunctional families out there and I don't know, if you applied these rules to the more dysfunctional families, that they would be able to cope with it, whether it's realistic.

I think the member gets full marks for bringing the matter to our attention, for raising this issue. I simply believe, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education believes, that the details of this bill are such that it may not be enforceable. That would be unfortunate because I think the problem should be addressed by members of this assembly.

Mr Jim Brown (Scarborough West): I support my colleague's bill for zero tolerance for substance abuse in schools. Zero tolerance for substance possession and abuse on school property ought to be pre-eminent in the minds of all teachers and principals.

This bill will mandate that the teachers and principals all have to report substance abuse or drug possession in much the same fashion as they do for physical abuse of children. Under the Child and Family Services Act a number of professionals, including teachers, are required to report to a children's aid society any case where they have reasonable grounds to suspect past or present abuse of a child under 18. Child abuse is defined as physical harm, sexual molestation, lack of medical treatment or an untreated emotional disorder. Drug or alcohol problems could come under this broad definition of child abuse, but the operative word is "could." Zero Tolerance for Substance Abuse Act replaces "could" with "will." Teachers and principals will report to parents suspicions or knowledge of substance possession or abuse.

Our problems with youth have accelerated. Youth drug-related offences rose 83% between 1992 and 1995, and violent youth crime has risen 124% since 1986, more than double in less than a decade.

This problem with a small segment of the youth population is affecting other kids and it's happening in the schools: kids in elementary school who chew blotters laced with LSD, kids who mix hash with tobacco for a tobacco high, and then there is the illicit sale of prescription drugs like Ritalin and Talwin. Ritalin and Talwin are amphetamines. They are forms of speed. They are

prescription drugs. If a kid is hyperactive, Ritalin gets prescribed to have a calming effect. However, to a normal kid Ritalin or Talwin gives a high, kids get jazzed up. They are really taking speed and they know it.

Metropolitan Toronto Police told me that Ritalin and Talwin in combination give a tremendous high. On the street these drugs are called kids' cocaine and the kids know how to feign hyperactivity to get a prescription. They forge prescriptions, they photocopy prescriptions. They do double-doctoring, going to different doctors for the same prescription.

1050

Each year, illegal prescription drugs make for a multimillion-dollar industry. In Metro Toronto two years ago, police estimated at least \$1 million to \$2 million in sales per month, almost always with kids.

Some Addiction Research Foundation statistics on student substance use are frightening: 30% of grade 7 students had consumed alcohol; 19% of grade 9 students and 41% of grade 11 students had smoked cannabis; 20% of grade 11 students have tried LSD; 3% have inhaled solvents, sniffed glue, taken cocaine, heroin, crack; 31% of students said someone tried to sell them drugs at school; 64% said drug use had increased in their schools.

The biggest problem is parental denial, and it continues. The Zero Tolerance for Substance Abuse Act brings the problem out in the open. Teachers and principals will know their responsibility and will know that they have a protocol or plan of action to deal with the problem. The parents will be told; the problem will be discussed. The problem is so insidious that the solution must be all-pervasive.

This bill, which I support, will help. Zero tolerance at school: It's about time, and it should be for all the kids in Ontario. They deserve a fair break when starting out in life. I urge all members of this Legislature to support this bill.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Although the intent of the bill is commendable and the intent of the member to try to deal with an obviously serious problem is there, the bill itself and the details of the bill are the problem. I really believe the devil in this thing is in the details, because very clearly you have what is going to become a very unenforceable situation. You're going to put teachers, principals and parents in a very difficult position that frankly is going to drive the problem more underground than deal with it.

The reality is that every school board in this province has a zero tolerance policy in place right now. The way this bill was brought forward as well — my understanding is that there has been with very little consultation with school boards, very little consultation with principals, with teachers, with parents. It is a bill that is simply going to create a mess of a situation that is already difficult.

When you already have a situation where schools deal very strictly and very aggressively with drugs and alcohol and tobacco abuse on school property, you already have a situation that in many ways is unenforceable now. We have the policy where school boards, for the right reasons, have banned smoking on school property, so what happens now is that smoking occurs across the

street from school property, in the mall next door. What does that do? It makes it more accessible for the drug dealer to work the mall across the street where the kids are smoking than to work the school property, where it would be harder to be and spend time. In some ways the legislation we introduced to try to help has made the situation even worse.

But what is bothering me about this bill the most is the details, where it takes a very punitive approach to everything, that the answer to everything is to punish, to hit, to nail, to slam the kids. Somehow we think we're going to be able to stop them from driving for a further year if they're convicted of an offence, which I guess would be smoking underage, that somehow we're going to stop them from getting into a club. I don't know if we're going to put an ankle bracelet on these kids or a stamp on their head to somehow say, "You can't purchase a lottery ticket because you were caught smoking on school property." It sounds wonderful, and it's a tough Reform line here. Maybe we'll cane kids next. The reality is that's not how you deal with those problems.

It puts teachers in a difficult situation. I have coached high school football and I have been a school trustee. I understand the situation in the schools. As a coach, often — or teachers in the school — I have had kids who have come to me to deal with issues or problems they were facing in regard to drugs or alcohol. They wouldn't go to their parents because they were afraid. They do this with teachers all the time.

What kind of situation does that put a teacher in now? That confidence, that ability of a student to go to a teacher or a coach they trust in the school and say, "I've got a problem with drugs" or "I've got a problem with alcohol and I need some help, and I want you to help me," they know that this teacher now must go to the principal, must immediately involve the parents, even if it's not a good situation to involve the parents in, rather than try to get some help for the young person.

You're creating a very difficult situation here. You're going to drive this problem further underground. We all agree that drugs and alcohol abuse are a problem in the school, outside the school and in society as a whole. But this bill would go as far as suspending; that's the whole thing. So you've got a child who has a problem and the answer to our problem is to suspend them so they spend more time away from school and can continue doing the activities they're doing, probably more easily and with less responsibility outside the school.

You can stretch this to say, "Anybody caught with a cigarette on school property will be automatically suspended." I'm picturing the grade 2 or grade 3 child who brings his mom or dad's cigarette to school as a joke or to show their friends or to show off, "Look, I've got a cigarette here." You would suspend that grade 2 or grade 3 child, according to this policy. It is unrealistic; it is unenforceable.

The intent is good. I think we should find some reasonable solutions for this problem, but to go to such a regressive, punitive approach to dealing with a serious problem is wrong, and at the end of the day it's going to make the situation worse than it is today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): Member for Halton Centre.

Mr Young: I'll respond briefly to some of the comments made by my colleagues. I thank those who spoke in favour of the bill.

The member for Hamilton East said there's a penalty: You can't buy a lottery ticket for bringing tobacco on school property. I say to him: Read the bill. The penalty for possession of tobacco is related to suspension only.

He talks about driving the problem underground. The entire purpose of this bill is to get the parents involved and bring the problem above ground, to bring it out into the open.

He talks about punishing and nailing the kids. That's not what the bill is about at all. It's about getting their attention, because the message is not getting through.

I appreciate the member for St Catharines's comments about the bill being unenforceable. I disagree, with respect. We can make this work; we have to make it work, for our children.

The member for Sudbury said it's a big-stick approach. How on earth can bringing parents together with their children with a social worker be a big stick? How is that a big stick? If he reads the Child and Family Services Act, he'll see that parents and teachers are required to report child abuse. Is that a big stick as well? Isn't substance abuse as dangerous as child abuse? I think the member for Sudbury should be aware that he's representing parents and children in Sudbury, not the OSSTF, of which he tells me he's still a member.

He says there's no intervention in the bill. This entire bill is about intervention.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Young: Stop the clock, please, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Young: This bill is all about intervention. I say to the member for Sudbury, before you come in here with all your hot air, read the bill next time.

The member says I haven't consulted with stakeholders. I have consulted with many, many parents and many, many children. Those are the real stakeholders in this issue. Those people have their lives at stake. I have consulted with them. I've also consulted with medical personnel and with social workers and others who support the bill and the concept.

1100

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I move that in the opinion of this House, given the importance of the agriculture and food industry to rural communities and the provincial economy, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs be encouraged to work with farmers, farm organizations, the research and investment communities to identify and promote new agricultural products and uses, both food and non-food, and to work with industry and rural communities to promote these new products and new product uses, and to identify and remove barriers which might hold back Ontario agriculture from realizing the benefits which these new products and product uses can bring to the provincial economy.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: From all the statements that

have been made by the Minister of Agriculture over the last two years, this is already happening, so why are we discussing a redundant resolution this morning? This is already happening, according to the minister. I would move that you rule this motion out of order, since according to the minister this is already happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): It's not a point of order. You'll have an opportunity to respond to the resolution. The member for Huron.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to first of all thank the members for being here today and I'd like to explain something about why I brought this resolution forward today. As a member of a rural community, it's very important for us to have a strong agricultural environment for our children to survive and flourish. One of the things I think members forget when they talk about agriculture, and I think it needs to be recognized today, is just how important agriculture is to our community and to our province.

I would like to say that from the urban perspective of some of the members within this group, agriculture brings to them safe food, a reliable product, but from the standpoint of a provincial economy, the Ontario agrifood industry generates \$25 billion in economic activity annually. It is also the second-largest industry in Ontario. The dairy industry is valued at \$1 billion annually, corn at \$970 million, the cattle industry at \$800 million and pork at \$500 million. So this industry is important to the province, but especially to me, because I represent Huron county.

Huron county has a population of 60,000 people and they are very dependent on the agricultural business. Private members' hour is supposed to be where you come together as a representative of your area and speak about an issue that concerns your community and the people you represent. The future of agriculture and our ability to move into the 21st century really is the most important issue to the people of my riding. That's how they make their living, that's how they keep their children on the farm, that's how they allow generation after generation to have a family farm and to proceed.

Today, as I thought about things that were important to my community, I felt it was important to explore opportunities about what we can do for agriculture, to make my community strong, to make it grow, to make it a community that will keep my children there for their lifetime.

I believe Huron county is the largest area that produces agriculture in all of the province. We have more census farms, more acres of farm land and more gross farm receipts than any other county in Ontario. We have a little battle on this side of the House with many of the rural members, trying to decide who represents the largest area, but I always, always say it's I.

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Huron county and of Ontario, and I have to do my best in my role here to ensure that we're creative enough to ensure that in the long run we will have opportunities in agriculture.

The challenge that we have in agriculture on all sides of the House, not just government members but members of the official opposition and the third party, is to ensure that we create an environment to allow businesses to

proceed and to keep many of the agricultural byproducts being developed within our community. I need to have jobs that result from the product that I grow in my community being developed right in the community so that my kids can decide whether they wish to farm or not, and if they don't wish to farm, that they have the ability to live in our community and to have jobs that relate to the only products we have, which are agricultural products.

Over the past two years here I have noted some of the things we need to concentrate on when we're looking at agriculture. We have to find ways to continue to look at adding value to products within my community and within other communities in Ontario. I've been most pleased recently about some of the products that have been presented to us through the Grow Ontario project. One of the things that happened in my riding is that they're starting to look at differentiating products within specific areas. For example, in the Jersey industry they're talking about differentiating cheeses that will allow us (a) to pursue a value added product and (b) look at exporting that product throughout the world.

I need that to happen, because as my community works harder and harder to increase their yields, to increase the viability of their land, they need to find markets for these products. It is my belief that we need to continue to look for creative solutions to allow farmers and the agricultural community, the agricultural organizations, to find some way to look at developing new and interesting products that we can export, that we can look at taking to other areas, that we can differentiate.

I hope that as a government — and I know I have some ability to talk to the minister; he listens to all of us in the rural community — we can entice this government to think about more Grow Ontario projects which allow us to enhance the development of new products and new markets so that my community will grow and flourish.

One of the other things I wanted to talk about today, and I hope the opposition members will give creative solutions, is that we have just announced a rural jobs strategy which will allow us to keep money in our communities in rural Ontario. That's very important for me. I export young people from my community. They go to university, they go to college, and what happens is, lots of them can't come back to my community because there aren't jobs available or there aren't opportunities there. A rural jobs strategy needs to find a way to find opportunities for our young people in rural Ontario.

I see we have mostly rural members sitting in the caucus at this particular point, a few urban members. I hope that today we can come up with different options to be able to look at this \$30 million the government has allocated to the project but has not yet set a strategy for, to come up with creative ways to enhance job creation, boost the rural economy and turn the economy of the province as whole into a better place to be.

It's very important for me as a rural member to also look at how we can move our products into the international marketplace. I need to find ways that the government can help my agricultural community increase the quality assurance standards so that we can move product into all of North America and the European common

market. In the long run I know that the people in my riding are going to be able to produce product, and I have to find a market that will allow that to happen. I have to be able to have a market; I have to be able to expand export; I have to be able to find investment so that people can come in and produce better product within our areas. The future of my community depends on what we do with agriculture in the province and with the money we have in agriculture.

Today, as I talk about what's important to my community, I'd like to say that it's important for my community that we work very hard with all agricultural groups to make a difference in how we're going to compete in the 21st century. My community has to be a viable community, which means we can keep youth in that community, that we have jobs for those youth, that we have opportunities to spread our products throughout the whole world. My community has to be able to know that they can sell their product to Toronto and to other places and everyone will be assured that we produce the healthiest, the best product and that it has a reputation for that, so we can demand the proper price for our food.

The people in my community work very, very hard to be a world leader. Huron county is ranked seventh in all of Canada in its ability to produce agricultural product, and I'm very proud of them for that. As a result of their wonderful ability to produce gross farm receipts, gross gate receipts, as a result of their ability to generate economic activity, I have chosen as a discussion today the biggest issue for Huron county residents, and that is, what we can do to make agriculture the most important backbone industry in Ontario.

1110

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I'm pleased to speak on this resolution put forth by the member for Huron. We indeed agree that agriculture plays a major role in Ontario. I guess what the member is saying by bringing a resolution of this type to the House is that the Minister of Agriculture is not listening to the important role and the voices that come from rural Ontario and she's reminding the minister to get out there and do his work. The government needs a constant reminder about the role of agriculture.

Let's look at the government record. They promised no cuts to agriculture and brought in cuts in excess of \$80 million. Now they say in this last budget they'll replace some of that money to about \$5 million. We have a net loss of \$75 million for the agricultural community.

The major effort put forth by 36 farm organizations which travelled here to Toronto, unprecedented that they would unite in such a manner, was to seek from the government a solemn oath that they would keep their promise, which they had previously broken, of no cuts to agriculture. Those farm organizations had better things to do than to come here to Toronto at a busy time of the year and seek the government's solemn oath that it would not cut agriculture. Other provinces invest almost 50% more money into the agricultural food sector than does Ontario.

Talking about new agricultural products and the value added aspect, this government originally cut funding to the ethanol plants here in Ontario. It was good for

farmers, it was good for the environment and it was good for jobs. They originally cut their funding to ethanol and it took the agricultural community to get them to reverse that decision.

We have forced amalgamations in Ontario of rural and urban communities. The rural community used to meet their representative at the hardware store, on the streets of downtown rural Ontario, in other social places, and they could go to that representative and say, "I have a problem with my agricultural drainage." Now, through amalgamation, particularly in Kent county, we are going from 131 representatives to 18. The rural community believes those jobs may become full-time and they wonder how the farmers who sat on those councils and made as little as \$4,000 to \$5,000 a year for their labours are going to have time to seek office in the new megacity. The outstanding powers taken through Bill 26 bring in an outsider to tell the communities that rural and urban centres will now be one.

Downloading: The province has downloaded provincial highways and the cost of those highways and their maintenance. It's a slap in the face of rural Ontario for the government to say these highways no longer have a provincial interest. They link the communities in rural Ontario one to the other, and this government says they have no provincial interest.

The loss of the money from the farm property tax rebate has many municipalities scrambling and wondering how they are going to cope with the withdrawal of \$170 million from that program. Even in the government's campaign they said, "We make a commitment to end the practice of downloading responsibilities on municipalities and regions, forcing them to raise property taxes or cut services." I say that those were shallow words.

The resolution talks about barriers. User fees to the tune of \$1 million for publications such as Forage Production, Ontario Ginseng Pest Control Recommendations, Integrated Pest Management, and the list goes on and on. They are charging the farmers of Ontario user fees for these publications that help them to do good business.

The Internet is a fast-moving part of our society. They are charging user fees for the written word and videotapes, but they have to realize that many rural Ontarians cannot access the Internet. This is particularly true in the north; their only access is to the written word.

AgriCorp is in place now and there's a report to the minister that says it might investigate full cost-recovery. We have to look at the competitive nature of Ontario in a worldwide scope. I say to the minister, do not go down this path. Farming has its risks. In Essex and Kent they have barely started to plant and the farmers know full well that spring is quickly turning into summer. They have the weather to contend with; they need not have a government that is an obstacle in their way. Farm output is \$7.6 billion here in Ontario, with a value added of \$22 billion.

Of course we will support this resolution. It's obvious that this government needs constant reminders about the role of agriculture in Ontario. I am pleased that the member has stood up. I hope she does the same in caucus and tells this minister to reverse what he has done to farmers in this great province of Ontario.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I as well am in support of this resolution that is brought forward by the member from Huron county. Having been born and raised in Perth county, I am well aware of the importance of farming in the rural and agricultural communities in southern Ontario. Having lived in northern Ontario for the last 37 years, I am also aware that there are a lot of farming communities up there that depend on the government not passing on the added costs to them and trying to run them out of business.

I am looking at some comments that were made during the last election campaign that there would be no cuts to agricultural programs and the policy plan in the Common Sense Revolution. This was circulated all around to people in the election. But then when we look back, shortly after the government was elected in July 1995, the Minister of Agriculture cut \$13 million; in November 1995, another \$13.1 million; in April 1996, \$56.7 million. As I heard the member add all those up, we're talking between \$55 million and \$75 million.

I can see why the member for Huron is trying to get a message out to the Minister of Agriculture: Don't continue to cut the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and lay off hundreds of people. The information I have is that we used to have a total of 1,850 employees with the Ministry of Agriculture, and now 954 have been given their layoff notices. As a result, the farming communities are having to pick up the costs.

Some of the headline stories coming out of various papers are saying exactly what the member for Huron is bringing forward, that the Ministry of Agriculture is cutting seriously and adding to what farmers will have to pay. Even the OFA president at that time said it may save the government money but is not likely to be as kind to farmers. Talking about, "Will farmers pay for AgriCorp?" he says here: "Producers are going to be asked to pay more for the services they now expect. If user fees are not another form of taxation, I am not sure what you'd call it."

There is a lot of unhappiness out there with the massive cuts that have taken place, not only in the Ministry of Agriculture but the dumping or downloading on to municipalities, which seriously affects the amount of taxes rural communities are going to pay. You say a lot of the provincial roads are no longer provincial roads; they should be local roads and the local communities should pay for them. The costs of education have been reduced. We had a debate on June 10, with my leader, Howard Hampton, criticizing the amount of downloading in agriculture and to rural hospitals, rural health care, increasing the pressure on all the rural communities by what the government is doing in order to fulfil one of their other promises, which was to give a tax cut of 30% to the wealthiest people in this province. It seems the cutbacks that are happening are as a result of it.

I can see it would be unfortunate if the Minister of Agriculture is not listening to some of the members in the Conservative caucus. I know if it were our caucus and the Minister of Agriculture was letting people down and wasn't doing his job, there would be a demand from the backbenchers that the Premier replace that particular minister. Maybe this is what Helen Johns, the member for Huron, is talking about, trying to have him replaced.

We know he has let down the francophone communities in Ontario. He also looks after francophone affairs. We know he hasn't stood up and spoken out on behalf of the francophone population, which in some of my communities is 90% or 95%, when it comes to Montfort Hospital, and Bill 108, the offences act. We're not going to be able to get parking tickets and speeding tickets in both languages. He has let them down on that. We know that nothing has come forward other than cuts in the last two years, going now into the third year. No wonder people are upset with what the Minister of Agriculture has brought forward.

1120

The resolution speaks quite clearly. The intention of this resolution is to get the Minister of Agriculture to put some of the money back into the rural communities, the agricultural communities, and promote and create employment, as the member for Huron has mentioned.

Once again I point out that in the book that was circulated around, the report of the Mike Harris task force on agriculture, it says there will be no cuts to agricultural programs and that it's not the policy of the Conservative government in the Common Sense Revolution. Yet we've seen \$75 million in cuts and it's hurting the rural communities. A lot of my family are still working in the agriculture industry, and they are being affected as a result of the dumping and the cuts to all the programs that are out there.

I know there are other people who want to make comments on this resolution, but I would like to point out that I support the member for Huron in her decision to put a little bit of fire under the Minister of Agriculture and maybe put a little bit of fire under Mike Harris to say: "You have broken your promise, what you promised in the election in 1995. Let's put that money back into the programs instead of just taking it all out and giving it to the wealthiest people through a tax break." Farmers are important, agricultural communities are important, and the surrounding areas that thrive off the wellbeing of these communities are important, rather than just cutting and slashing and giving a tax break to the wealthy.

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today in support of the resolution put forth by my colleague the member for Huron. I think everyone realizes how important it is to recognize the contribution the agrifood sector makes to rural Ontario and indeed to the provincial economy.

I'd like to offer some statistics at the beginning that reflect the degree of this contribution. First of all, the food and farming industry in Ontario is the second largest industry — and it generates over \$25 billion in economic activity annually. Some \$5.3 billion worth of agricultural and food products are exported annually, an increase of 160% in the last decade.

Ontario also leads the nation in food processing, shipping more than \$21 billion worth of goods in 1995 alone. That accounted for a full 48% of Canada's gross domestic product from the food industry. Our dairy industry alone is valued at over \$1 billion annually, corn and soy at \$970 million, the cattle industry at \$800 million, and \$500 million is derived from the pork industry. Investment in the food and beverage industry

has increased by 57% since 1995, and it has risen to \$860 million.

We provide 640,000 jobs and produce an additional 31 jobs for every \$1 million that is invested in agriculture and related services. Finally, for every \$1 billion in agricultural exports, we create 15,000 jobs. So we can see the importance agriculture has to Ontario and indeed to our country.

Ontario's agrifood sector is Canada's most diverse, accounting for 90% of Canada's soybean production and 100% of the dried bean production. I share with you that 23% of Ontario's dried beans come from Perth county alone. In Ontario, we're the top producer of corn, vegetables, floriculture and nursery crops, worth more than \$479 million, and Ontario farmers produce two thirds of the ginseng grown in Canada.

This government and this Minister of Agriculture believe in the importance of consulting with stakeholders of the industry when it comes to moving forward with our commonsense plan. I can tell you that since this government was elected, we have seen a new spirit of cooperation between OMAFRA and the stakeholders, whether it be the Ontario Cattlemen's Association or any of the other industry associations, and ROMA as well. This minister is committed to working with them and consulting with them.

To give you a few examples of the consultations that have gone on since our election in 1995, at the beginning of our government being formed, Minister Villeneuve held a round of table talks with the stakeholders to determine what should be the ministry's priorities for the next few years. We have held public consultations on a variety of topics.

Most recently we had open discussions chaired by Marcel Beaubien and myself with the farmers, the farm groups and the rural municipalities on proposed amendments to the Farm Practices Protection Act. Our stakeholders know that we made commitments to them during the election campaign. Delivering a Farm Practices Protection Act with teeth was a campaign commitment that we are going to fulfil. The need for changes to the act was underscored by Charlotte Clay-Ireland, the immediate past-president of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, when she said: "Without farmers, you wouldn't have food on the table. We have to protect them."

During our consultations we heard strong support from our stakeholders for an act that will establish agriculture as a provincial interest and give farmers and food processors the protection needed to get the job done, allowing this sector to continue to prosper and grow, and most important, to remain competitively functional in the global atmosphere.

A guiding principle of the new act has to be that we establish agriculture as a provincial interest, but that we do it in harmony with the environment, health and safety. Our stakeholders realize this. As the Ontario Federation of Agriculture president said at one of our meetings, "We state in the strongest possible terms, the Farm Practices Protection Act is not a licence to pollute in any way." As a matter of fact, farmers are well known for their stewardship of the land and the environment. They know it is

in their best interests to do the right thing with their environment.

In keeping with our practice of consulting, we are setting up a panel to consult on the rural jobs strategy announced in the last budget, and my colleague Barb Fisher is heading that up. The three-year, \$30-million rural jobs strategy aims to enhance job creation, boost the rural economy and in turn the economy of the province as a whole.

Prior to our election we committed ourselves to working with those in the agricultural community in helping promote innovation through investment. We introduced the Grow Ontario investment program, which by matching funds from the private sector enhanced the development of new products and new markets and created new partnerships.

The government invested \$5 million in the commercial alcohol ethanol plan. Between 140 and 185 permanent jobs will result from this venture. It is calculated there will be 640 to 700 indirect jobs, and 45 to 60 spinoff companies are predicted as well. We've been supportive of this program in both southern Ontario and eastern Ontario.

Over the last two years this government has delivered on a number of other commitments: We increased market revenue insurance coverage to 85%; we supported and promoted the whole farm support program through NISA; we introduced reform to the farm tax rebate program.

1130

In last year's budget, the finance minister introduced the retail sales tax rebate for farm building materials. This program was recently extended for another year. In Haldimand county alone this program has resulted in one new hog barn being built a week. Just in case the members opposite were not listening, that's one hog barn being built per week in just one county in the province of Ontario. Our agriculture policies are working, and that means people are working.

I believe this government is living up to a commitment to help farmers to identify and promote those new agricultural products and their uses, and has been successful in identifying and removing the barriers that are currently and have been holding back Ontario agriculture from realizing new benefits.

However, the job is not finished. By passing this resolution, we will send a signal to our farmers that we are committed to working with them on these continued new challenges. We will continue to work with all the farmers, farm organizations and rural municipalities to identify and remove those harmful barriers that have been part of our system. We've already repealed Bill 91, the NDP law that would have unionized the family farm. We have also introduced Bill 116, a red tape reduction bill. This Legislature passed Bill 46, which created AgriCorp, a service delivery agency created for farmers that is run and operated by farmers.

We have heard from the opposition this morning about a number of concerns and cutbacks. If we look at the history of the agricultural industry in this province, the farmers well recognize the cuts that occurred since 1990 and how they decimated the agricultural community, and how things finally, in the last two years, have slowed and

come to a halt and started to return to that industry that needs to be supported in the very best way.

This resolution put forth this morning will certainly enhance that and we are in support of the resolution. We congratulate the member for bringing it forth.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I'm pleased to rise this morning to speak to this resolution as well. The message we're getting from the government is confusing. I can understand that this member wanted to bring this resolution forward because she felt the government wasn't doing enough, yet they stand and say they are doing enough. I'm a bit confused with their message, but I understand what the member for Huron is saying to us.

In the few minutes I have, I find it necessary to be a bit parochial in that I'm going to speak more directly to exploring the bounty of the sun parlour county, that being Essex county's agrifood industry.

In Essex county the agrifood industry creates over 6,000 jobs. They invest over \$40 million in wages and gross over \$200 million worth of field, vegetable, greenhouse and fruit crops. An interesting statistic is that Essex county has a greater agricultural output than any one of the Atlantic provinces. That's only as a comparison because we realize that Essex county is the most southerly part of Canada, so it would be understandable that we have the climate in which agricultural production can be carried on at great length.

For example, the economic value I speak of: field crops, \$92.7 million a year; processing vegetables, \$18.7 million; fresh vegetables, \$16.6 million a year; fruit crops, \$7.8 million; livestock, milk and poultry amount to \$16.9 million a year; and greenhouse crops, \$85 million a year. That says a lot about what agriculture means not only to Essex county but to the province.

Field crops, for example: The major field crops in Essex county are soybeans, winter wheat and grain corn. About 93% of the acreage in the county is planted in those crops.

I spoke of the value of greenhouse crops to the economy of Essex county in Ontario. Essex county is the largest and most intensive greenhouse vegetable growing area in Canada, and we're very proud of that statistic. There are also 10 acres of mushroom houses under production in Essex county.

When we speak of processing vegetables, we know the engine in processing in Essex county is the processing of tomatoes by the H.J. Heinz Co. By the way, this is a booming industry in the town of Leamington and the surrounding area, because the H.J. Heinz Co has become a leader in the industry in both Canada and the United States. Much of the production of the Heinz Co in Leamington has been production that has been moved in from the United States.

In field vegetables, Essex county is the province's earliest source of fresh vegetables. As I mentioned, you can understand that because of our temperate climate.

It's also, when it comes to fruit crops, a very productive economic engine in the county. Nearly 200 growers are involved in the production of Essex county's diverse fruit crops.

We have a tendency in large urban Ontario not to think of the things that come to our local grocery store, to the

market, that come from the fields of the province, particularly of Essex county. We think of sweet corn, potatoes, eggplant, zucchini, squash, asparagus, always in great demand in early spring; we have melons and Spanish onions, and fresh tomatoes obviously.

Not to forget the livestock and poultry industry, why, of course it's an important sector of our economy in Essex county, although it has been diminishing in the last few years. That has given us some concern, but it still is an important part of that economic machine.

Other commodities we have in Essex county in the way of the agribusiness: honey, Christmas trees, popping corn — Essex county is a great area for popping corn — maple syrup —

Mr Hoy: Flowers.

Mr Crozier: My friend the member for Essex-Kent mentions flowers. A great deal of the greenhouse industry is involved in the growing of flowers. As a matter of fact, in the Ontario flower- and plant-producing industry, bedding plants are the mainstay of the economy, with nearly 400 million plants being sold annually, while potted plants, nursery stock and cut flowers are also part of that.

We in rural Ontario understand today, and I think this resolution goes to emphasizing to those friends of ours in large urban Ontario, that we have a great manufacturing business industry in Ontario but were it not for the food that is put on our table, we wouldn't be able to keep those plants going at the pace they are.

Having said all that, there are still, as my colleague has mentioned, some barriers to the growth of agriculture in the province. We have yet to see what's going to happen as the result of downloading. The farm tax rebate, for example, that is an incentive to the farming community, is now a responsibility of the municipality. As to where the municipalities are going to get those tax revenues they previously received in the way of funds from the provincial government, we have yet to see how that will come about.

When my colleague from Essex-Kent mentioned the downloading of roads, I thought in particular that there are a number of them throughout Essex county that for some reason or another the minister has said, "Well, these really shouldn't be under provincial jurisdiction because they don't have that much influence on the economy of Ontario."

All this \$200 million in agricultural products doesn't just jump out of the field and fall into Montreal and Toronto markets. They have to travel over roads. The trucking industry in the county is strong because of the agricultural industry. But we have to have good roads over which to move them. The Minister of Transportation is doing a disservice to rural Ontario by saying they now have to take responsibility for these roads. I think it's a responsibility of all Ontarians to see that we have a good road system over which to move our products.

1140
User fees are another thing. The Common Sense Revolution said there would be no cuts to agriculture. Not only did they make specific cuts to programs and funding, but they've also then turned around and said, "We're going to start charging you for the services we

provide." Because of the importance of agriculture in Ontario, this is something on which the Minister of Agriculture is abdicating his authority. He should be doing everything he can to help the farm community in Ontario, not hinder it.

With that, I will repeat what I said at the outset. I am pleased to support this resolution. It's unfortunate that the member for Huron felt she had to bring it forward and that the Minister of Agriculture has not been listening, I guess. I hope he does because we know that as goes Ontario, so goes the agricultural industry in our province. I thank you for this time to speak on this matter.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I stand today in support of this resolution put forward by my colleague from Huron because of the increasing importance of agriculture and food in the province of Ontario and the recognition of the attention we must all pay to the industry to help it flourish.

Ontario has the largest farm-gate value in Canada, with over \$5.6 billion a year. Ontario has the largest food-processing, value-added industry in Canada at over \$25 billion a year and growing at an extremely rapid rate. This makes agriculture and food an important part of Ontario's economy, placing second only behind the auto industry in importance.

The good news is that this government recognizes its importance. The Grow Ontario program is an example of the kind of support OMAFRA is giving to the industry. It encourages strategic partnerships in agriculture and industry in order to qualify for support. One very dramatic way the government has used to encourage the industry is changing tax structures and providing incentives for businesses around the world to have the opportunity to invest research and development dollars right here in Ontario.

Evidence that there is significant benefit for businesses to invest in Ontario was presented this week in Houston at an international convention and conference on biotechnology. The study compared Ontario, Massachusetts, California and Texas. Where Ontario's after-tax cost of R and D was \$41.20, it was \$48 in Massachusetts and California and a whopping \$59.40 in Texas. All reports from the conference indicate that companies with research dollars to spend are taking a serious look at investing in Ontario solely because of this tax incentive. That's good news for agriculture and food and it's awfully good news for Ontario.

Even with this support, we must do more. There are indeed barriers to the industry in getting new products to market that affect our competitive advantage globally. No more prevalent will they be than with the emergence and acceptance of the new frontiers which agriculture and food are going through in the world today. This new frontier is actually an old frontier, with the development of knowledge and new technology which will revolutionize global food production and ensure a safe and abundant food supply for the future.

The biotechnology revolution is upon us and is one which needs the support of government in educating itself, the public and the media as to the benefits this new field provides for the public and the assurance of food supply in Ontario and throughout the world. Educating

ourselves, the news media and the public is crucial in not only gaining acceptance of the products that will result from this new technology, but in ensuring that the farm community can continue to flourish with 21st century thinking and technology.

We are already recognized worldwide as a producer of high-quality, safe foodstuffs in Ontario and Canada.

It is important that government take a lead role in establishing processes to deal with these circumstances. History tells us that government is always slower than private industry when it comes to change. As we enter into the modern agriculture and food revolution, we must recognize the importance of our support, action and encouragement of the industry and its evolution.

The means of producing wealth are changing. They will change as we enter the 21st century. Our knowledge and the ability to commercialize it will be the new currency of the new century, and that's why I support this motion and encourage all members of the House to do the same.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I'm absolutely thrilled to join this particular debate and support the member for Huron's mentioning of the significance of agriculture to the provincial economy.

As an urban MPP, I find it absolutely essential that we emphasize and reinforce again and again the strategic linkages and interrelationships between the agricultural foundation of the provincial economy and our urban progress, our urban survival. People often ask me, why would you be interested in agriculture? The very simple answer: We all eat, regardless of where we come from.

I see agriculture and the new biotechnology revolution that the member for Halton North mentioned as absolute keys to job creation in this province. We have heard in recent days critics of the parties opposite claim there are few prospects for youth in our economy. To me, one of the key areas for job creation is to remind members of the linkages between what happens in rural Ontario and what happens in urban Ontario.

For example, if we do not have a vibrant, vital, strengthened provincial agricultural economy, we have fewer jobs in our communities, urban communities particularly, in such things as events management, in the travel industry, in the strengthening of our viticulture. That's the essential reason I support this motion today.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The time allocated for the Liberal Party is completed. However, there is some NDP time left. I'd like to speak in favour of the member's resolution if I could use the NDP time, with unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have consent? We'll split the time.

Mr Bradley: Okay we are splitting the NDP time. I want to speak in favour of the member's resolution for some of the same reasons the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale did. I think a lot of people who represent urban ridings often don't take into consideration the importance of rural ridings. That's because we're not faced on a daily basis with the problems that are confronted by farmers in our province.

We have a need for agricultural land in viable use in this province. I look at my own area, the Niagara Penin-

sula, and see that we have a couple of things that are very valuable. One is we have temperatures or a climatic condition which is conducive to tender fruit growing. It's a pretty unique condition that exists just adjacent to Lake Ontario. The amount of time you have to grow products on top of the escarpment compared to below the escarpment, for instance, is about 28 days' difference, 28 frost-free days. We need to preserve that agricultural land in the Niagara Peninsula, particularly in the northern part of the Niagara Peninsula, for the purposes not just of today but well into the future.

The pressures, however, for development of that land are very significant. The farmers will say: "We would like to continue to farm this land. We like the job of farming, it's a nice occupation. We feel we're doing an important job. But we find it difficult economically from time to time, because in North America we are used to cheap food prices." I think all those who represent rural areas understand that. We like our cheap food prices. There are only two ways to maintain farmers on the land and keep them viable. One is through paying the appropriate price for the food, a price that reflects the cost plus some profit to be made. The second is any initiatives the government can undertake to assist farmers.

1150

I know the member wants to see, as we all want to see, promotion of Ontario products. We do a pretty good job now, but we can always strive to do better in promoting our products. The tender fruit grown in the Niagara Peninsula is of outstanding quality, but the farmers believe they're not getting the kind of prices they should to reflect the input costs involved. It's a tragedy to watch a very good agricultural land, in special climatic conditions, disappearing. I see it along the Queen Elizabeth Way. We see subdivisions being built, though we need subdivisions around the province, on very good agricultural land.

The member, by having these kinds of discussions, by raising this issue today, is joining with so many of us in the House in wanting to preserve agricultural land but to preserve the farmer as well. You can't simply say you're going to preserve the land; you have to say you're going to preserve the farming operation itself. If we can do that, we can continue to have an extremely important and good agricultural industry in this province. We rush quickly, from time to time, to save other industries in towns or cities where there are 4,000 or 5,000 people directly affected. Farming affects far more people than that.

I appreciate the time I've had. I know another member may wish to join in this debate.

Mr Hastings: Mr Speaker, just to continue —

The Acting Speaker: You would need unanimous consent to do that. Agreed? Okay, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Hastings: To continue with my emphasis on the theme of job creation that we need to focus on, I had the opportunity yesterday to visit the University of Guelph and to learn a tremendous amount about what is going on in that particular area with all the partnerships and strategic alliances being brought about through the grower associations, the universities, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and a lot of players from the private sector.

I learned from that situation yesterday that the application of biotechnology is one of the key tools that will ensure that the member for Huron's resolution will come to strong fruition in the very near future. The use of biotechnology in its widest applications will help to produce better products for our domestic and international markets.

That was particularly brought home with the viticulture situation. They're experimenting with strengthening the type of grape to withstand colder temperatures in this climate, even in the Niagara region the member for St Catharines speaks of, and the strength and variety of alfalfa, which is a key foundation, along with soybeans, for many new products and services that the Ontario urban citizen will acquire and appreciate.

The enhanced value of biotechnology, along with a lot of other stuff that's going on at the University of Guelph in terms of expanding our agricultural economy, the product base and the number of jobs that can be created — not only directly in agriculture, but in all the other related industries, particularly the brewing, food processing, travel, wine and event management industries. That is one of the sectors where we're going to find a huge number of jobs in the coming years, through the new applications of technology and changes in the barriers the member for Huron mentioned.

I'm very happy, as an urban member of the rural caucus, to support her resolution today. I think it will take great stead in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Mrs Johns: I'd like to thank everyone for joining in the debate today. As you know, it is very important to my riding that we continue to think about the ability to make my riding viable, to allow it to continue to work with the community, to develop.

I'd like to say just before I go into my closing remarks that we have here today one of the most important, I want to say "assets," it might not be the right word, that we produce in Huron county. Today we have a page with us from Huron county. Her name is Meghan Martin, and I hope that in the long run I can keep her in Huron county with an ability to create jobs and an ability to find things for her to do, so that she wants to stay in Huron county and be part of what I consider a great rural community.

Working together, we must continue to increase exports, find and exploit new markets on a worldwide basis, produce more high-quality products, more value added products and develop new and different products that will meet international standards. We have to promote, promote, promote rural Ontario and the things we do in rural Ontario.

All of these initiatives are right for the time and right for the Ontario agrifood and rural sectors. I encourage the government and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to continue the tremendous work they have done with the agriculture and food sectors in the past and to ensure that in the future we're global leaders with respect to the agrifood industry for years and years to come.

I hope all the members of the House will continue to work with this industry, because it's imperative to the

people of Huron county that we build a strong agrifood industry. It's important obviously to other areas; we heard about Essex today and we heard about some other areas. It's very important that we continue to build this industry.

I am proud to be the representative of a strong agri-food county, which translates into a strong economic county. Bringing value added products and job growth not only to my riding of Huron but to the province as a whole will be good for all of us. I hope that in the ensuing months you'll have an opportunity to thank a farmer for the food you eat. It's safe, it's reliable, it may be the healthiest in the world, and I'm very proud of the people who bring that food to your table.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' business has expired.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR
SUBSTANCE ABUSE ACT, 1997
LOI DE 1997 SUR UNE TOLÉRANCE ZÉRO
EN MATIÈRE D'ABUS DE SUBSTANCES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): We will deal first with ballot item number 83 standing in the name of Mr Young. If any members are opposed to a vote on this ballot, would they please rise at this time.

Seeing none, the member for Halton Centre has moved second reading of Bill 134, An Act to promote zero tolerance for substance abuse by children. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."
All those opposed, say "nay."
In my opinion, the ayes have it.
There will be a vote on this.

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): The member for Huron has moved private member's resolution 55. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

We will now have the vote on the first item; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1204.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR
SUBSTANCE ABUSE ACT, 1997
* LOI DE 1997 SUR UNE TOLÉRANCE ZÉRO
EN MATIÈRE D'ABUS DE SUBSTANCES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Richard Patten): All those in favour of the motion, please rise until your name is called.

Ayes		
Brown, Jim	Hastings, John	Parker, John L.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Shea, Derwyn
Churley, Marilyn	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Danford, Harry	Kormos, Peter	Tascona, Joseph N.
Fox, Gary	Leadston, Gary L.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Grimmett, Bill	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, Terence H.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise until your name is called.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Carroll, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Bartolucci, Rick	Kwinter, Monte	Tilson, David
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 24; the nays are eight.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): Mr Speaker, I request that the bill go to the standing committee on social development.

The Acting Speaker: Everyone in favour that the bill go to the standing committee on social development? Agreed. The bill will be referred to the social development committee.

I now leave the Chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAREGIVERS WEEK

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): As part of Seniors' Month, this week has been designated as Caregivers Week so that we may have a greater appreciation of those who assist seniors with activities of daily living or specific health problems.

Caregivers include family members who assist their elderly and disabled relatives with personal care and heavy household chores. In hospitals and long-term-care facilities, seniors rely on the high level of care they receive from staff committed to providing the best service possible. In the community, we are thankful to those who are part of care services, such as home support, home nursing services, homemaker services, as well as the myriad volunteers who give of their free time because they care about our seniors.

Although the demand continually grows, Mike Harris's cuts to hospitals have resulted in fewer health care workers and many fewer nurses. Doesn't this government recognize that lost nursing care will leave sick and frail seniors unable to fend for themselves, neglected and with improper care?

It is expected that our seniors will increase at least 50% in the next 20 years. As Caregivers Week comes to a close, I urge this government to take steps now to ensure that caregivers will be there in the future for the people of Ontario.

Let us all salute the caregivers among us for their dedication to our elderly. Our seniors enjoy —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Increasingly across this province people are expressing disgust with the manner in which this government, and in particular its

Attorney General, has mishandled the family support plan and victimized thousands upon thousands of women and their kids.

A recent column in the Sault Ste Marie newspaper was headlined "Family Support Plan Gaffs Disgusting" and "Serve Harnick's Head on Platter." This is part of the growing outcry about an Attorney General who has betrayed women and children who relied upon him to protect them by ensuring that the support payments that were being made by absent parents were transmitted promptly to them. Charlie Harnick, the Attorney General, has gone beyond merely disappointing, has gone beyond the point where a mere apology will suffice; he has victimized women and kids.

"Serve Harnick's Head on Platter," this columnist writes. "The next story I hope to write is about Charlie Harnick's resignation. I hope to write it soon." The only way this government can reassure those women and kids who have been victims and who continue to be victims is by ensuring that this incompetent minister is no longer the Attorney General. Indeed, a new word, a neologism has been coined: To "Harnick" now means to lie.

FIESTA WEEK

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): This Sunday, June 15, my riding of Oshawa will kick off its 36th annual cultural festival known as Fiesta Week with a parade of floats and marching bands, followed by awards, pavilion displays and the annual teddy bears' picnic.

As part of Oshawa's cultural heritage, Fiesta Week brings together the people of Oshawa for a week's celebration of our city's multicultural heritage. Fiesta provides the residents of Oshawa and our entire province with an opportunity to examine the diverse culinary, dancing and musical talents from a wide variety of multicultural backgrounds. Throughout next week various cultural communities in Oshawa will operate pavilions which will feature the food, dance and entertainment of their particular culture.

The numerous dedicated volunteers, along with the Oshawa Folk Art Council, have worked diligently throughout the year to make Fiesta Week the success it has been each year, and I'm sure this year will be no exception. I would personally like to congratulate all those for the thousands of hours they contribute in making Fiesta Week happen.

I would like to invite the members of the House as well as the people of Ontario to visit Oshawa during the week starting June 15 to join us in Oshawa's 36th annual multicultural festival, Fiesta Week.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): All of us in the Legislature have listened to the Minister of Health talk about the importance of restructuring the health care system in this province. Frankly, all of us would welcome any restructuring that would improve patient care. The fact is that restructuring in Thunder Bay means we're left with a system where seriously ill patients are being left in hospital hallways because there's nowhere else to put them.

There's no sense in setting totally unrealistic deadlines and closing hospitals when replacement care is not in place. In Thunder Bay, St Joseph's General Hospital had acute care services one day and the next day did not. Hogarth Westmount was forced to shut its doors the same day. Then the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital had its acute care beds severely cut back. The result is a system put under severe stress that has now led to seriously compromised patient care.

The fact is the Health Services Restructuring Commission got its numbers wrong, set unreasonable deadlines, and the people of Thunder Bay are paying the price. The commission hit Thunder Bay first, and it hit Thunder Bay with bad numbers that will not adequately serve the needs of all of us in northwestern Ontario.

The minister in this House yesterday indicated he expected to see the transitional beds in operation by December. What good does that do my constituents and those in the northwest who are faced with inadequate health care today? The minister needs to acknowledge that patient care is suffering as a result of these decisions, and he needs to get involved to fix it.

People in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario deserve quality health care. Unless the minister acts now to acknowledge this growing problem, he is simply abdicating his responsibility as health minister.

SKILLS CANADA COMPETITIONS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On May 6 and 7, students from across the province attended the Skills Canada competition for Ontario and Kitchener. The mission of Skills Canada is "to champion and stimulate the development of excellent technological and leadership skills in Canadian youth and to strengthen our competitive edge in the global marketplace."

I'm very proud to report that 12 students from Central Technical School in my riding won medals at that event. Gold medals were won by Sandra Aloï, Carlos Simao, John Cutulle and Steven Ventura. Silver medals were won by Gints Bruveris, Michael Andras, Martin Spellerberg, Jose Faria, Deoram Bachan and Rajah Subramani. Bronze medals were won by Ken Rosa and Evan Markiewicz.

The national competitions were then held in Red Deer, Alberta, on May 29 and June 1 of this year. Central Tech won three medals: Martin Spellerberg won a gold medal, Sherri Pickett won a silver medal and John Cutulle won a bronze medal.

I want to congratulate all the students who took part in this competition. I know your school and your teachers are very proud of your accomplishments. From my colleagues and myself in the New Democratic Party, best wishes, and keep up the good work. You are an inspiration to students everywhere.

EVENTS IN WENTWORTH EAST

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): I rise today to inform the House that this weekend will be the 29th celebration of Canada Flag Day in Stoney Creek. This has become an annual event in the city, honouring our country's flag and heritage. Only recently has the federal

government decided to proclaim an official flag day, after citizens of my riding have been celebrating it for 30 years.

Flag week is filled with many different activities and events, culminating with a flag day parade throughout downtown Stoney Creek this coming Saturday.

The festivities began last weekend, with a re-enactment of the battle of Stoney Creek, a turning point in the War of 1812. This historic battle took place in the twilight hours of June 6, 1813. This battle would make a legend of 19-year-old Billy Green. After discovering an encampment of American invaders, Billy ran many miles to deliver the information to British troops stationed in Burlington Heights. In the ensuing hours, Billy Green led a tiny squad of 704 men in a silent ambush of the Americans, who numbered over 3,000. The Americans were taken by surprise, routed and forced to retreat to Fort George in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The evolution of our nation owes much to this historic battle and to those brave individuals who lost their lives for the nation that would become Canada.

Finally, on the subject of great efforts and victories, I would like to congratulate the Glanbrook Rangers junior C hockey team from my riding. The Rangers recently won the all-Ontario junior C hockey championship. I look forward to congratulating each of the members personally at their victory banquet this weekend. All in all, this is a great week of celebration in Wentworth East.

1340

POLICE SERVICES

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): I wish to bring to the attention of the House an open letter to the Premier by Roy Rawluk, a senior constable in the Metro Toronto Police Service, who has served our community for 22 years. Mr Rawluk has come forward with no other motivation than that of advancing the public interest in sounding the alarm about the implications of Bill 105, the Police Services Amendment Act.

All members of this House know the pervasive effect of this government's downloading and how it will affect every element of service delivery in our province. We in the Liberal caucus have consistently pointed out that municipalities will face a severe shortage of funds as a result of the Tories' dumping of \$180 million. As a meagre counterweight, the government has presented Bill 108, which would increase the fines from the Provincial Offences Act which accrue to municipalities. Under this bill, municipalities will obtain complete control of police financing and of the majority of appointments to local police service boards.

Constable Rawluk, however, tells us the real impact of these bills. In his letter to the Premier he notes that cash-starved municipalities will have the capacity to set ticketing quotas for police officers to achieve. In addition, he states that police administrators are proposing to buy more radar sets to increase municipal revenues. Those police officers who do not achieve their quotas may face disciplinary actions.

Constable Rawluk has sounded the alarm about the disgraceful Tory traffic quotas on ordinary citizens. This

government must reconsider Bills 105 and 108. Nothing else will do. The public interest and our police officers demand it.

BREAST CANCER

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Located on Queen Street East in my riding of Riverdale is a place called Willow. Willow is a resource centre which was established to assist women in Ontario who are living with breast cancer. Through compassionate, dedicated volunteers who have experienced breast cancer, Willow provides current, comprehensive information, support and referrals with understanding and sensitivity.

On May 9 I attended their third anniversary fundraising dinner and was again moved and inspired by the women who talked about their struggles with and survival of breast cancer. The keynote speaker was Toben Anderson, a vibrant woman in her 30s who told a harrowing story of her battle with breast cancer and how her life changed as a result, for her, for the better. She then trained, and having never done it before, climbed the highest mountain in Antarctica to help raise awareness and money for breast cancer. I cannot do her story justice here. Then there was 11-year-old Arielle Goldberger, whose mother survived breast cancer, who came up with an idea, and together with her friends in school, raised \$300 making jewellery and selling it in their neighbourhood. Arielle presented this cheque to the Willow at the dinner.

There are many worthy causes for us to support in Ontario, but I would urge all people out there, if they're trying to find another worthy cause to add to their list, to get in touch with Willow. There's no other place like it in Ontario. You can deal with women who have experienced breast cancer who can help.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I rise in the House today to speak about amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Imagine not being able to walk, write, smile, talk, eat and sometimes not even breathe on your own, and yet your mind and senses remain unaffected. ALS is a rapidly progressive and fatal neuromuscular disease. Muscle by muscle, nerve by nerve your body shuts down, yet your mind and senses are alert as you watch yourself die. This is what life is like for the 6,000 Canadians who suffer from ALS.

It can strike anyone and eventually results in complete paralysis and death, generally within two to three years from diagnosis. Two to three Canadians die every year from ALS. Although promising research studies are conducted, there is still no known cure.

Across Ontario, and in fact Canada, June is ALS Awareness Month. Throughout the month, volunteers will be canvassing the public to raise funds to fight this devastating disease. All funds raised will be spent on ALS scientific research.

In my community Lynn Frenette, Adrian Maes and Dan Stone are leading a group of volunteers who will be selling live cornflowers grown by Parson's Florist for

ALS, as well as holding a barbecue at the Orangeville Mall.

I urge all Ontarians to make a generous donation to the ALS Society so that the dream of finding a cure can soon become a reality.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources Northern Development and Mines): I would like to bring the House up to date on the serious forest fire situation we are facing in northern Ontario right now.

Yesterday, I toured the forest fires around Timmins and the Kirkland Lake areas, along with the member for Cochrane South and the member for Timiskaming. We saw forest fires that caused us a great deal of concern but we also saw the hard work of the Ontario fire rangers and of the Ministry of Natural Resources and others in those communities doing all they can to make sure that people remain safe.

The safety of people in communities is our first priority. That's why I've instituted an emergency area order for communities in the Timmins and Kirkland Lake areas. The emergency area order empowers us under the Forest Fires Prevention Act to take whatever steps are necessary to safeguard human life and private property. The emergency order is a precaution I've put in place to make sure we can move quickly if necessary.

The main fire in the Timmins area is Timmins 12, which has grown to more than 7,000 hectares. Fire crews have been working hard to protect the cottages and camps in the Watabeag Lake area. Many have been saved with the assistance of the OPP. We've evacuated more than 100 cottagers in the Watabeag Lake area west of Kirkland Lake.

I'm happy to report that there have been no casualties to date. The OPP has advised travellers in the Timmins-Foley area using Highways 11 and 101 to be very careful and to stay off secondary roads. In northwestern Ontario, Red Lake 9 is more than 1,800 hectares. People from five outpost camps have been evacuated, and the forest fire danger is extreme across almost all of northern Ontario.

I've put in place a restricted fire zone that bans open fires across the north, from the French and Mattawa rivers to the Manitoba border. We want to prohibit open fires because the forest are very dry and the danger of starting new fires is extreme.

Unfortunately, the fire danger doesn't look as though it will improve quickly. We hope to see some rain in the next couple of days which may improve the situation. However, the risk of thunderstorms continues and lightning from thunderstorms has caused most of the fires.

Right now, more than 60 forest fires are burning in Ontario. So far this season, we have had almost 490 forest fires that have burned more than 16,000 hectares of forest. We have more than 1,300 firefighters in the field right now. This year, we have increased the number of Ontarians working on fires over last year's number.

As Minister of Natural Resources, I've had the opportunity to speak to many front-line firefighters who are risking their lives every day to protect us and our provincial resources. This is MNR at its best. The front-line workers have agreed that our new firefighting system is working better than expected. Modern technologies such as lightning locator networks, long-range aircraft and computer-based analysis have brought us into a new era of forest fire operations. This new system has allowed to close in the last couple of years 17 of the 45 fire bases and ensure that the crews are travelling to the fires, not waiting at remote camps for the fires to come to them, as happened before our changes.

Again I want to commend the efforts of the Ontario fire rangers, our contract fire crews and our initial attack crews from western Canada in fighting these fires. I also commend the efforts of the OPP and others in the communities which have been affected. We will continue to work hard to make sure people and property are safe and we'll work hard to keep the threat of forest fires under control.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Before we go to the next ministry statement, I noticed that Ms Crljen's class from Sunnylea is here today and I just have to introduce them. I wouldn't have done that, except my daughter Victoria happens to be in that class.

Interjections.

The Speaker: That was perfectly in order.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Exactly one year ago, our government launched Ontario Works, our mandatory program to help people on welfare become self-sufficient.

I am pleased to announce that later today I will be introducing legislation to further reform Ontario's welfare system. With the support of the Legislature, the Social Assistance Reform Act would fulfil two key commitments in the Common Sense Revolution: It would fully implement mandatory work for welfare and it would create a separate income support program for people with disabilities.

The legislation would create two acts: the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act. I would like to take a few minutes to talk about each.

The Ontario Works Act would overhaul a welfare system that is 30 years out of date. It would restore the welfare system to its original purpose: a transitional program of last resort that will provide people on welfare with a stepping stone back into the workforce.

1350

The legislation I'm introducing today will ensure this objective remains paramount. As a government we owe it to the people on social assistance to provide them with the opportunities they need to become self-sufficient. Equally, we owe it to the taxpayers to ensure that the dollars they give us are going to help those truly in need.

Ontario Works, our mandatory work-for-welfare program, will meet this dual obligation. Today's proposed legislation will allow us to complete the implementation of Ontario Works by extending this requirement to sole support parents with children in school.

Individuals on general welfare who are currently participating in Ontario Works are telling us that the program is helping them develop skills, make contacts with potential employers and give something back to their communities.

There are now more than 20 municipalities across the province implementing Ontario Works. More than 20,000 people have participated in this mandatory program and we are hearing very positive reports. People are saying they appreciate the opportunity to improve their skills and to contribute to their communities.

The Ontario Works Act would also strengthen our ability to prevent fraud and abuse to protect the welfare system for those who really need it.

I would like to now address the Ontario Disability Support Program Act. Members of the Legislature will recall that last week I announced the government would create a new income support program to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities. The Ontario Disability Support Program Act would move people with disabilities off the welfare system and provide them with greater opportunities for independence.

It should be noted that Ontario currently provides the highest level of disability support among Canada's provinces. I would also like to note that people who are receiving disability benefits under the family benefits program would have these benefits protected under the proposed program.

We have been told by people with disabilities that the current system does not meet their needs. They want individuals to be treated individually. Many have told us that they can and do want to work. They don't like being labelled "permanently unemployable." We have developed eligibility criteria based on their experience and insights. They have asked for an employment system that focuses on employment and they want the practical help they need to get and hold a job.

The proposed system would help people take advantage of employment opportunities. It would allow people with disabilities to accept work without worrying about any delay in having their benefits reinstated if they could not continue with the job.

People with disabilities have told us they don't need more studies; they need a government to deliver a new program of income and employment supports to provide them with real opportunities for independence. With this legislation, we intend to meet their needs.

I believe the legislation I am introducing today would provide opportunities for real and positive change in the lives of people in need in Ontario. Previous governments failed to undertake the necessary overhaul of Ontario's welfare system, despite the fact that they knew the system was not working.

We have a responsibility to people in need and to the taxpayers of this province to fix the system. It's time to provide people with the opportunities they need to become self-sufficient.

In closing, I would like to convey thanks to our municipal partners and to my caucus colleagues for their advice and input, and I would also like to thank all my staff and the staff of the ministry for their hard work in getting this major piece of our government's agenda under way.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm happy that the Minister of Natural Resources took the advice I gave him on Monday to visit the very serious forest fire situation. I'm also glad that it's of great concern to him, because for those of us who live in the north it's of immeasurable concern. I'm glad he has invoked the emergency area order and the restricted fire zone, because those are not only two things that should be invoked but also a way of controlling.

But the best control that government could have had was to ensure that the 17 of the 45 fire bases had remained open, because forest fires are burning right now in the areas where there were the fire stations, and no one should take responsibility for that except the minister. They still haven't got their act in order. They still don't know how to manage forest fires effectively. The downloading is taking place; it's in disarray. The front-line workers may be telling you that it's working better than they expected, but they also told you, and you know, that it's not working as well as it was last year and in previous years.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): We've been waiting for some time, in fact two years, for this legislation that's coming today, which affects everyone in Ontario who is in need of social assistance. We have some significant concerns with Ontario Works. The biggest questions are still out there. You will introduce legislation today, but the significant details are not known. You are downloading the administration of this service to the municipal level and they don't know what you want. You need a computer system that is so large, and the programs have not been written nor has the computer system been selected that is going to be used by every city and town that you will require to institute Ontario Works. And who pays for the program?

You say you're thanking municipal partners for helping you in this? Let me tell you today, Minister, the municipalities and towns across Ontario are not saying thank you; they're saying "Thanks for nothing." You haven't given them the tools. You are creating probably the biggest chaotic mess since your partner in crime at FSP. We're talking about the transition of hundreds of thousands of people, with a significant transition period. If this were a business and it were the Attorney General, we would have fired him a long time ago for the mess he made in family support.

We have significant concerns about how all this will be administered through some computer system that we still don't even know exists and that your own ministry officials are saying will not be available for a minimum

of two years; those are your own people telling us not for two years.

We have some significant concerns around the definition for those who are disabled and who are in need of assistance. Even today, we still don't know how those criteria have changed. All we know is that the criteria are changing and we have no detail again. In fact, it will likely all be controlled by regulation, which will allow you to make the changes you want without the benefit of debate in this House, and this is very much par for the course.

You talk about fraud in the system. I suggest that you need people to root out that fraud. You are laying off hundreds of people in your own ministry. These are the same individuals who have been out there detecting fraud. You have spent millions of dollars detecting fraud, only to find that you have saved much less than you spent on trying to detect it. We have significant concerns about your new fraud squad that's going to go out there and detect it. You need your computer system in place to help you detect that fraud. Much of that is mismanagement by your ministry because you don't have the appropriate system in place to detect it, and the cost of that now will be borne by your transfer partners, all those delivery agents, the cities and towns across Ontario.

Your announcement today does nothing to allay any fears of those who are in need of assistance, who currently get it and who may not. You have some 158,000 people currently in your family benefits program who are disabled. How will those people be moved over? We have significant concerns.

You talked about the key promises you made in your Common Sense Revolution. A significant one was no cuts to the disabled, but we see that in your two years of government so far, you have not lived up to that promise.

We are looking forward to the details. We are waiting to see regulation. I will tell you this: You don't need new acts and new legislation to change names and change titles. We want to know what you're really doing to the people who need help in this province.

1400

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The member for Beaches-Woodbine has already expressed on behalf of this caucus her cautious support and approval of the principles behind the Ontario disability support programme.

However, it remains to see the act and then, more importantly, the regulations. We have great concerns about the extent to which the definition of "disability" might become increasingly restrictive and the punishment that may be meted out to people who don't meet an excessively high threshold to pass that standard.

Having said that, I tell you that this minister, like her predecessor, continues to ignore and deny the reality of growing poverty in this province. Over 400,000 recipients of social assistance are but children, and this minister chooses to punish them for the increasingly higher numbers of unemployed, for the increasing joblessness, the increasing poverty, the increasing homelessness this province is experiencing under the regime of Harris and his gang here at Queen's Park.

This minister speaks with grossly inflated figures about participation in workfare. Today she speaks of some 20,000; it's impossible that that number could be arrived at even with great generosity. Twenty thousand, and in Algoma there are only 60 or 90 people, less than 7% of all people receiving benefits, participating in their so-called workfare program; in Muskoka, a mere 35, about 3% of the welfare caseload, are participating in their so-called workfare program.

This minister has nothing but disdain for the poor in our province, for the unemployed. There is nothing in her program that will create job training, that will provide for re-education and upgrading of educational skills so that people can participate or even attempt to participate in the contemporary workforce. For her to talk about Ontario Works in the context of the current abolition of rent controls, in the context of the abandonment of adult education, in the context of the abandonment of women by way of underfunding and eliminating the funding for women's programs, is beyond jokeable. It's merely pathetic.

This minister with her Ontario Works program is merely going to continue to punish the poor for being unemployed. This government promised 725,000 jobs. Instead we get smoke and mirrors and a retitled general welfare assistance program. This government told us we were going to get jobs. Instead we got smoke and mirrors. Food bank use has continued to grow throughout the province. Last fall here in the city of Toronto, 13 households were evicted every day from their rental units because this government's cuts forced them to choose food over rent.

This government chooses to pay for its tax cut — two thirds of which is going to go to the top 10% of income-earners and not a penny of which is going to create a single job, a single new job here in Ontario. This government prefers its phoney tax cut, its scam on the working and middle-class and poor of this province, two thirds of which is going to the top 10% of income-earners, over the welfare and wellbeing and futures of over 400,000 poor children in this province. Shame on them. This is a pathetic minister.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): What the Minister of Natural Resources tried to pass off today is simply incredible. What he doesn't mention is that if you look at the fire attack bases that were closed by his government, the bases at Temagami, Gogama, Elk Lake, Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake, they are either right in the middle or surround the area of forests burning up right now.

What he doesn't mention is that the two fire attack bases he kept open were in his own riding and the Minister of Finance's riding, two places where we hardly ever have forest fires in the province. We've got a minister here who's more interested in putting fire attack bases in Conservative ridings than he is in putting them in places where they can fight forest fires. That's what's going on.

But it's worse than that. The reality is that the thousands of MNR staff who have been cut by this minister are in fact the MNR staff who are the backup forest firefighting crews. This minister didn't realize that. They are the people you immediately bring in when forest fires start to get out of control. So it's not just closing the attack bases; you've shredded the second-line capacity of MNR to fight fires.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): With us today is the Chancellor of the Republic of Lithuania, Jurgis Razma. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism responsible for small business. I want to talk about your government's scheme to increase municipal property taxes and its effect on small business.

We know that many people across this province are going to see dramatic increases in their property taxes. In some cases taxes will more than double. It's small business that's going to pay the price. You're shifting the burden of business taxes from the bank towers to the corner stores. Reports say some businesses will face tax increases of over 200%. You say that won't happen, yet you have given small businesses no real assurances. This is just another example of your government downloading costs and responsibilities to pay for your income tax decrease. How do you expect small businesses to cope with this massive increase in property taxes?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): Let me just say that this government is doing a great deal for small business. You have to go back to what the last two budgets have done for small business. The small business community is delighted with the personal income tax reduction of 30%. That is a big, big saving for many small businesses and provides the cash flow for small businesses to put back into their businesses and hire more people. That creates jobs and economic development.

Also, the fact that the employer health tax has been eliminated on the first \$400,000 of payroll has eliminated something like 80% of businesses from paying any employer health tax at all. That means there could be a saving of up to \$10,000 for a small business. That kind of money can be used by small businesses to hire more people, to improve their equipment, to improve their facilities. In other words, we are doing a great deal for small business, particularly in the tax field.

Mr Cordiano: This minister is sitting on his hands doing precious little to protect small businesses against these huge increases, the burden that's going to be transferred from big businesses to small businesses.

You've isolated the municipalities and left them to figure out how they're going to cope with the \$1.6-billion

cut in the business occupancy tax, then you turn around and tell small businesses that if they don't like it they should complain to municipalities across this province. The Minister of Finance promised that he would introduce a companion piece of legislation to protect small business from these massive increases, but we haven't seen that yet. Where's the bill? We know you're committed to the deep pockets of your big business friends, but what are you doing to protect small businesses from these huge increases?

Hon Mr Saunderson: May I just point out to the people in the opposition benches that the previous two governments raised taxes 65 times, and of those 65 tax increases 11 were income tax increases. That's a very shocking thing.

This is Tourism Awareness Week, and the tourism industry is the quintessential small business. I've had the pleasure of travelling this province this week visiting our small business tourism establishments, not only hotels and resorts but also tourism activity centres. They are saying to us: "Don't you stop doing what you're doing. You keep right on doing it. You are helping small business. We want you to keep on doing what you're doing."

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Answer, please.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I don't care what those people over there say. They don't like to hear the good news, the jobs that are being created; 101,000 new jobs in the last three months says a lot about —

The Speaker: Thank you.

1410

Mr Cordiano: It's obvious this minister hasn't got a clue. Does he sit at the same cabinet table as his Minister of Finance? He should be telling the Minister of Finance that he promised small businesses he would introduce a companion piece of legislation to protect them against the massive increases in property taxes we'll be seeing as a result of your downloading on to municipalities, and as a result of the revenue that's been lost by lifting the business occupancy tax.

Minister, it's a straightforward question: When are you going to stand up and protect small businesses? You are the minister responsible for small business. You are simply shirking your responsibility when you're not standing up in cabinet and defending small business owners. They're going to be hurt badly by these changes and you're doing nothing. When are you going to stand up and defend the interests of small business? When are you going to do that?

Hon Mr Saunderson: It always amazes me with these questions that never is there any solution offered by those people over there as to what they would do.

Interjection: Raise taxes.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Yes, that's what they would do, raise taxes.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Saunderson: On the new assessment system, which has been raised today, we know the bill is in process and we're very committed to it. What it provides is for the municipalities to have a special mill rate for small business, and that is going to be a very important thing for small businesses. They will have consideration

of the fact that they are small businesses and that they cannot stand big changes to the tax system. In the new assessment system, the municipalities will have a chance to grant a special mill rate to small businesses. That says a lot about what this government is doing for small business and I'm pleased with that.

HOSPITAL BEDS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question today for the Minister of Health. On February 5 of this year Ed Whitehill died in an emergency room hallway in Peterborough. This week I asked you about Ed Whitehill, who died as one of 25 people who were forced to be on stretchers in the hallway. You related to us a story from when you were apparently minister in exile, where you saw the account of Mr Whitehill's death on television and you called the deputy minister and said to her, "Margaret, they must have lined those patients up in the hallway" — "they" being the hospital staff — "and called in the media." You're alleging that the staff at Peterborough Civic Hospital did this as a media stunt. You're wrong. That was a condition that existed there for weeks and it's a condition that exists there today.

I want to know if you're going to stick with this bully attitude of your government, with this see-no-evil pretence that there's nothing wrong with the health care system. Will you apologize to the people of —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The incident of the gentleman dying is quite separate from the CBC report I referred to in the Hansard that the honourable member has. At the time, it was apparent to me and subsequently apparent to others who have looked at the situation that more could have been done at the hospital with respect to the patients who, for about three nights, were all out in the hallway when there were empty rooms behind them. To note that something could be done, once the phone call was made, all the patients were put back in the rooms within a very few hours. So I make no apology for that and I make no apology for the phone call.

Subsequently the hospital realized it had some problems. It is a very cooperative atmosphere in Peterborough this day, so the honourable member shouldn't be trying to add dynamite to something where there is no fuse. There is an investigator in there working with the hospital, with very good cooperation on both sides.

Mr Kennedy: I've spoken to the staff in Peterborough today and I can assure you that following your comments there is much less than a spirit of cooperation. They have hospital records to show, that demonstrate conclusively, there has been an average of 15 people in the hallway of the emergency room. Minister, you're completely wrong. They can prove it to you. The head of nursing can prove it to you. The head of emergency can prove it to you.

You cut \$3.4 million from Peterborough Civic Hospital. Your ministry staff counselled them to close 30 beds last December. The staff told you in October this would hurt patients. They have been there day after day in that emergency room hallway. You cut their care. You took the money away to fund those beds.

Minister, we see how tired you are in your position. We see how you cannot bring yourself to deal with your responsibility, but for the sake of the Whitehill family, for the people of Peterborough, the people of Ontario, if you had the gumption, you should be resigning, but at least apologize —

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: There are two sides to the story which I and the honourable member could not disclose — the other side of the patient's story in the hallway. While you're making calls, you may want to talk to the nurses who attended to that patient.

Second, ministry staff are at the civic hospital as we speak doing two reviews, one operational review and one clinical review. To give the hospital the benefit of the doubt, we're there. It's a cooperative atmosphere. The investigator has already concluded the report and I think the board recently made that report public. There are a number of steps the hospital has to take and the ministry will take to ensure care improves at that hospital. To simplify this situation, as you are, does injustice to the hospital and to the ministry staff who are trying to make things better for the patients in Peterborough.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, how dare you? How dare you stand in your place and try to draw attention away from the fact that you accused front-line nurses and doctors of placing Mr Whitehill in a situation that led to his death in a condition of ignominy in a hospital emergency room hallway, that they did that for a media stunt simply to direct blame away from where it belongs, Minister, from you — you cut \$3.4 million.

There are dozens of hospitals, three of them in Hamilton, St Joseph's right here in Toronto, St Mike's, all over the province, that are having to put their patients for three, four or eight days in emergency room hallways because you won't fund them. You should at least apologize. You cannot continue to scapegoat the front-line staff. You cannot ignore the families of people whom you have hurt through your rampant cuts in this province. The facts will out in this instance.

The Speaker: The question, please.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, please give you one last opportunity. Will you apologize to the staff of Peterborough Civic, to the people of Peterborough and to the Whitehill family?

Hon Mr Wilson: If there's any indication — some of the administration that was there at the time of this incident aren't there any more. The hospital board and the people who are there now are trying very hard and working in a cooperative atmosphere. I will say for the record, as I've said in this House before and I've said in committee, the 20 beds they closed were closed without my permission or Mr Johnson's permission and the hospital admitted at the time that they prematurely closed some beds and left —

Interjections.

Hon Mr Wilson: No, I don't think I'm blaming them. It's just they prematurely closed some beds and some other pieces weren't in place and we had the unfortunate incident of people in the hallway. This is not related to the patient's death. I won't say more than that. It's not related to that death and to mix the two up does an

injustice to the patient's family, it puts fearmongering in that community when people are working very hard to give the best patient care possible at the Peterborough Civic Hospital.

1420

RENT REGULATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today you begin public hearings on your tenant ejection legislation. Your bill will bring rent control to an end and lead to higher rents.

We know you must have a strategy to bring some developers together to have them announce that they are willing to build more affordable housing. We're sure you must have a strategy where you'll have a group of developers on stage with you, who will say, "We will build more affordable housing if the government will only pass Bill 96 and gut rent control."

I'm waiting for my invitation. I'm waiting for this happy announcement that developers are about to build more affordable housing. Could you give us the date of your announcement, name the developers involved and state how many affordable rental units will be guaranteed by the gutting of rent control and the passage of Bill 96?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can absolutely guarantee the member of the third party that I will ensure he gets an invitation when that happens. It will happen, because the changes we're making to the Rent Control Act are among the issues that developers and people who are in the apartment-building business have said is a restriction to their getting back into the business.

It's not the only issue; there are a number of other issues. Property tax is probably the number one culprit, because as all members know, tenants pay up to four times the amount of property tax people in single-family dwellings do. We're going to address that issue as well. We're going to give municipalities the opportunity to address that problem, with a number of other issues. We have commitments from the building industry that if we resolve all of the issues that have been planted in their face by previous governments, they will get out there and build. I'm confident they will.

Mr Hampton: I'm glad to hear the minister say that such an announcement is going to be held, because we're going to ask day in and day out for our invitation. When this possibility happens, we're going to go and ask those same developers about their concern over the GST and about their property taxes, which we know are going to increase.

The fact of the matter is, you don't have any guarantees. Even the people who are appearing at the hearings right now continue to raise the issues of property taxes and the application of the GST. Those are the real obstacles to more affordable housing.

If you can't guarantee everything, if you can't guarantee new housing because the GST and higher property taxes stand in the way, why are you gutting rent control, why are you attacking tenants, why are you going to force them into a situation where their rents are going to go up and up? You can't guarantee any new housing.

Why don't you deal with the real issues instead of attacking tenants?

Hon Mr Leach: What we can guarantee is that nobody is going to build under the flawed system that's in place at the present time, the system that was put in place to ensure that tenants never have an option. Nobody would ever build a rental building under the silly system your government put in place. We have at least 6,000 people coming into the rental housing market every year. Last year in Metropolitan Toronto, 37 units were constructed. That is shameful. The reason they won't build is because of the very flawed, dumb system that government put in in 1992.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): No one is building, not even under this so-called government that is supposed to be creating a climate for building. Even under these people, they're not building and neither is the private sector.

But I have another question of this minister. This morning you said, "We're going to get tough with property owners who don't maintain their buildings." Your so-called tenant protection package, however, gets rid of rent freezes on buildings where there has been a municipal work order. Under the current NDP law, if a bad landlord doesn't maintain that building, he doesn't get a rent increase. Under Bill 96, your tenant protection bill, if you don't maintain your building, you get rewarded.

Minister, if you care for tenants, as you say you do, then are you willing to amend Bill 96 to keep automatic rent freezes on buildings that have a municipal work order? Are you willing to make that amendment, yes or no?

Hon Mr Leach: Tenants want the units repaired. Under the current, flawed system, they can go in and get a rent freeze. That doesn't get the thing repaired. We want to give municipal bylaw enforcement officers the opportunity to come in and set a work order and ensure that work order is carried out. If the work order isn't carried out, the municipalities will have the authority under this legislation to go in and do the work, complete the work, get the building back in good shape and then charge the landlord back on his property tax. What we're trying to do is make sure the disgraceful situation that exists at the present time is corrected and tenants finally have some rights to make sure their buildings are kept in good repair. This legislation does that.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): To the Minister of Community and Social Services: We listened today as you talked about your Ontario Works program. You seem to want to slide over the fact that your Ontario Works program, the essential of which is your workfare program, hasn't exactly worked so far. It raises a number of issues.

For example, the participation rates for Ontario Works are minimal so far. The fact of the matter is there is very little in the way of job training. The fact of the matter is we haven't seen the jobs. The fact of the matter is that despite the fact you've been out there harassing municipalities and community organizations, they're simply saying: "This is inadequate. This doesn't work."

How are you going to guarantee to people who desperately want to work that the transition to Ontario Works isn't going to be the same bungling that has marked your handling of social assistance to date and the same kind of bungling that we've seen with the family support plan, where you essentially victimized the poorest —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you very much. Minister.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): If the honourable member thinks Ontario Works is bungling, he certainly hasn't been out there in the communities where it's up, running and working. I have been out there; I've talked to the people on welfare who have been participating, who are pleased to have the opportunities. I've talked to the administrators. There are all kinds of stacks of clippings out there about what's happening in those 23 communities where they're getting it up and running.

At the same time as the honourable member would sit there and make complaints — first they say we're not moving fast enough, then they're saying we're moving too fast — last year when we announced Ontario Works we clearly said it would be phased-in implementation across the province, community by community. That is exactly what's happening.

People on welfare want the opportunities to get off welfare. They don't want to be there. Ontario Works is the program that is going to help them get off welfare.

Mr Hampton: People on social assistance want jobs. They want to work. That's not what they're finding right now. They aren't finding the jobs and they aren't finding anything in your Ontario Works that gives them any assistance, that gives them any help whatsoever.

It's even more serious than that. Your change to the new system is part and parcel of the download of services to municipalities. What you're going to try to do here is download about 200,000 social assistance cases on to municipalities. But your download talks are in chaos. In fact, your download talks, the more we hear about them, are going worse and worse. Can you tell us, have you worked out with the municipalities how they're going to take on 200,000 more social assistance cases, how you're going to force down on to them 200,000 more?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I hate to disillusion the honourable member across the way, but there are indeed jobs out there. As he heard the Treasurer mention the other day, we've had a net new job increase in this province of over 1,000 jobs per day. That is a good testament to the strength of the economy and the fact there are jobs out there. The problem is that for many people on social assistance they lack the skills or other supports they need to get off the system. That's what Ontario Works will provide for them.

The other thing is that if they weren't finding the jobs, we would not have had an almost 22% reduction in the number of people on general welfare, an unprecedented drop in the number of people having to rely on social assistance.

The other thing I would like to remind the honourable member of is that, with all due respect, many communities are already administering the family benefits component, are already administering sole support parents. We

are moving to single-tier delivery at the municipal level because it works the best and they have the proven track record to do that.

1430

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): More and more, this minister stands and responds like her colleague the Attorney General. The fact is that unemployment in Niagara region is up to 10.9%, and for young people it's double that; the fact is that jobs aren't there for large and increasing numbers of women and men, young women and men and their parents who want to work.

One of the downloading issues that municipalities have to contend with is with respect to children. We already know that services are inadequate, in largest part due to the cuts you've already imposed. Now you're going to force single parents to participate in your workfare program, but you haven't said what's going to happen to their kids.

Just how are child care costs going to be covered? Are we going to see something in legislation? Are we going to see programs for parents who are involved in workfare that extend beyond 3 and 3:30 in the afternoon? Are you going to allow municipalities perhaps to issue vouchers for unregulated care?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Sole-support parents, I don't believe, should be denied the opportunity to get back into the workforce. Most of those parents want jobs. Most of those parents recognize, and the research will back this up, that they and their children, their families, are better off if they are in the workforce. They want those opportunities and I don't believe we should deny them.

Yes, sole-support parents will be expected to participate in Ontario Works. For those with school-age children, those who require day care assistance, that assistance will indeed be there for them as it is currently, because we want to make sure those individuals have the opportunity.

I would like to remind the honourable member that the third party has said that most people want jobs. I agree, but the welfare system they left us with trapped one in 10 Ontarians in welfare — not where they wanted to be. Even my predecessor Tony Silipo, a member of the previous government, admitted the welfare system isn't working.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On March 27 I wrote to you with concerns about the apparent disrepair and disarray and decay of our provincial highways. I asked you at that time: "Would you comment if the number of potholes and the state of disrepair has increased? If so, has that manifested itself in the number of lawsuits being increased as well?"

I thank you for your reply on June 3. In it you stated very clearly, "There has been no noticeable increase in complaints or lawsuits for the highway system in general." That's a direct quote, Minister. Do you still stand by those words?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the honourable member for the question.

Certainly the letter we wrote back to him was accurate as far as the information the ministry had at its disposal at the time.

We are working towards rehabilitating our highway system and we have a substantial investment of over \$30 billion, and we're trying to utilize the limited dollars we have in making sure our highways are maintained in a safe manner. We could use more influx of funds, absolutely. I think there is still a lot more to do. But we're going to continue to make sure we put those dollars, the limited dollars we have, into highway infrastructure repairs.

Mr Bartolucci: I think we have a case here of Palladini versus Palladini. Minister, I have a document from your office, signed by you, indicating that claims against your ministry for negligent highway repair have gone up over 600% in two years. You said that with the information you had you wrote that letter. I asked for and was given this information as of February 18, so you had the information.

Can you please explain to this House how you as minister could sign off this letter, which said there hadn't been an increase, when you signed this letter which indicated that between 1994 and 1997 there had been an increase, from 365 cases to 2,281 cases, of 624%? Which Palladini should we believe?

Hon Mr Palladini: In spite of the things the member across the way is saying, I just want him to know that he is still a pal of mine in some ways.

First of all, I don't know whether you're comparing apples with oranges, but as far as the information the member is making reference to, I'd certainly be delighted to take a look and spend some time with him and my staff to show him that the letter I wrote was correct as far as additional increases in 1997, based on the letter he sent to me in January. But the message is very clear.

I would like to say to the honourable member that we have a highway infrastructure repair problem. The auditor said that 60% of all roads are badly in need of repairs and we have invested the limited dollars we have in making sure that work is done.

PAY EQUITY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Labour. I have another question about your labour transition instability legislation.

Most people are now aware that your bill picks a fight with public sector workers and their unions in a clear attempt to distract attention away from your government's bungled cuts and downloading. But under the cover of your war with labour, your bill also makes an unrelated sneak attack on the rights and paycheques of low-paid women workers. In fact, you're making several cowardly changes to the pay equity law, the very law that is supposed to guarantee fair pay for women in this province.

One of these changes was today highlighted at a news conference by Mary Cornish of the Equal Pay Coalition. She pointed out that "bad bosses will be rewarded" if they have disregarded the law in the past. Under your changes, bad bosses will no longer be responsible for

back pay when they get caught. This is not fair to good employers who have made the adjustments. Why are you rewarding bad bosses?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): First of all, I think it's important to recognize that the changes we introduced and made last week really are an attempt to ensure that as the restructuring takes place, all of the labour issues —

Mr Christopherson: Answer the question.

Hon Mrs Witmer: — are dealt with in an expeditious manner and that each and every employee can be treated fairly.

Mr Christopherson: Pay equity.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Now I'd like to focus on pay equity. I would just remind you that this government has committed up to \$500 million to the broader public sector. In fact, that was the largest payment that was made by any government in the past, so we certainly have demonstrated our commitment.

I would also remind you that we have had a review done of pay equity, that we have been told we have moved beyond the initial phase of pay equity and we are now into a maintenance mode. What we are endeavouring to do here is to make sure that as we restructure, again, we can facilitate a smooth restructuring in the broader public sector —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): The reality is, you're cutting the pay for some of the lowest-paid women workers in Ontario. You've already cut out 1,000 of them. Furthermore, you cancelled the comprehensive study the NDP had planned on and just got a short study done to give you the information you wanted.

Your government is setting back the clock on fairness to women in this province in every single way. You keep standing there and saying you're committed to pay equity, but at every opportunity you are rolling back the rights to fair pay for women who fought so long and so hard to achieve it.

The current law protects women's pay equity in the case of an amalgamation or sale of a business. This is just simple fairness. Don't you see that? When a woman has gained fair pay under the law, she shouldn't lose it as a result of amalgamations and downloading, cuts to hospitals and classrooms and other things you're doing.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Ms Churley: This is a shocking betrayal of the working women in Ontario. Will you reverse this odious piece of legislation? Will you announce that today?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's obvious that the members opposite have not looked at Bill 136 as it was written. There is no attempt by the government to determine any outcomes, and for them to presume that there are going to be these changes in pay equity — it's simply not written in any of the acts. Unlike the social contract which was introduced by the NDP, which did determine outcomes, did roll back wages and did determine there were to be days taken off, our act does not in any way, shape or form indicate there are going to be decreases.

1440

AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Earlier today I had the opportunity to have my first private member's hour since being elected in 1995, and I chose to look at the importance of the agrifood industry since I represent what I believe to be the largest agricultural region in Ontario — we have a little battle about that lots of times in this caucus.

The thing I think is important is that all the parties unanimously agreed with me that the agrifood industry is very important to our rural communities and also to the provincial economy. I was wondering if you could take this opportunity today to discuss the new agricultural products, their uses and how we're promoting them within the Ministry of Agriculture.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Huron, and I want to congratulate her for having her resolution adopted unanimously by this House this morning.

The Grow Ontario program, which brought \$10 million of public funds to the agrifood industry, matched by more than \$10 million from the private sector, is a very important step. We have invested \$8 million in the ethanol industry, a brand-new industry in Chatham and in Cornwall, and it will be providing new markets for corn and other grains.

The three-year, \$30-million rural job creation project is a most important project to rural Ontario and will be creating jobs in the agrifood sector along with other sectors in rural Ontario. Through the enhanced partnership between the ministry, the University of Guelph and our three agricultural colleges, we have seen the numbers of students registering for next year's program increase by double-digit numbers. Our young people have confidence in the agrifood sector, and this government is supporting the agrifood sector as much as anyone can ever hope for.

Mrs Johns: Along with promoting product and allowing the organizations and industries within my community to be able to compete, they also have to be able to compete in new areas as a result of changing technology and their ability to increase the yields within their land areas. I was wondering if you could tell us what barriers to agriculture have been removed as a result of your tenure as the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I'm proud to say on behalf of this government that we've cut red tape. We're cutting income taxes, something the two previous governments have gone against completely. They increased taxes considerably. We repealed Bill 91 and Bill 40, which would have allowed the unionization of the family farm, which we feel would have been a very negative move. We reformed the taxation system. The opposition, when they were in government, told us that the taxation system needed to be reformed, that the farm tax rebate was out of kilter, and we have fixed it and I am proud to say we have fixed it.

We have extended the sales tax rebate on capital improvements, which is promoting capital construction, because remember, and I want all my colleagues to know this, for every \$1 billion of agrifood production, there are 15,000 additional, new jobs in this province. That's the importance of the agrifood sector.

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGERY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. In the city of Hamilton, we today face a crisis with regard to waiting lists in emergency hip surgery, in hip replacement surgery. Waiting lists of over a year are very common with a number of physicians we checked with, a number of specialists. Last week an 87-year-old woman had to wait four days for emergency hip surgery after a fall, because of a lack of space and a lack of ability in operating rooms.

Dr Frank Smith, a leading orthopaedic surgeon in the city of Hamilton says: "There are no beds in the hospital. There are no beds in the emergency department. It's just an absolute crisis."

What did you do, Minister? You came in in March with your dog-and-pony show, bells and whistles on, and you announced \$750,000. Four months later, not one Hamilton hospital has seen one cent of this supposed new money you keep talking about. It's real money, you keep telling us. All you do is keep announcing it while people are waiting over a year, while people are waiting days for surgery.

Minister, will you give me today at the end of question period the cheque that you promised in March to bring to the Hamilton hospitals tonight?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The hospital has been contacted in regard to the \$3-million announcement I made in March and they were made aware of their allocation just after that time. We hope they're able to go ahead with the surgeries. We're working with them right now to make sure people don't have to wait as long as indicated in the media articles, which I agree with the honourable member is a ridiculous amount of time.

When a province like this, that spends 20% more per person on health care than anyone else in Canada, has the waiting lists we have, that tells me that we couldn't restructure the health care system fast enough. The rest of Canada has restructured. Their waiting lists in Winnipeg and in BC today are significantly lower than ours. Their surgery numbers are up because they've restructured. We'll be encouraging even more rapid restructuring in the Hamilton area. As a result of the stories we've been getting in the past few weeks from that area, restructuring is clearly long overdue.

Mr Agostino: Minister, you don't seem to get it. The reason this is happening is because you have cut over \$56 million out of Hamilton hospitals. It's that simple. It has nothing to do with restructuring. It has nothing to do with your destruction task force that's going through Ontario. You cut \$56 million. That is why there are waiting lists. That is why people are waiting in emergency departments for days and days.

Most surgeons have waiting lists of over a year. Dr Smith has 280 people on a waiting list. Dr David Wismer has over 100 people. Seniors are being forced into maternity wards and paediatric departments after surgery because there are no beds, because you took the money away from the Hamilton hospitals.

What I don't understand, Minister, is why you came in in March and made this great, grand announcement and, at the same time, shut them out for the last four months. There are stories in the Hamilton Spectator: "Some People 'Too Old for Hip Surgery.' Elderly Pay Price for Budget Cuts." Minister, you don't understand. It is your cuts. It is your decision to basically shaft hospitals across Ontario. Again, will you, tomorrow morning, if you won't give me the cheque today, send the money you committed —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: The hospital is free to go ahead and do the surgeries and they'll be reimbursed as part of the regular budgetary process that every government has followed for decades in this province.

Mr Agostino: The money you promised a few months ago.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, come to order.

Hon Mr Wilson: The money is promised and the money is flowing. Mr Speaker, I will also remind him that we put unprecedented amounts of money that we've taken from savings we've seen in the system and reinvested every penny.

Mr Agostino: Where's the money? We haven't seen any of it yet.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, I'm warning you to come to order. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: From savings we've seen in administration in waste and duplication —

Mr Agostino: Where's the money? Show me the money.

Hon Mr Wilson: — we put \$4.8 million for replacement joints into the system in 1995 —

Mr Agostino: Where is it, Jim?

The Speaker: I've warned you three times. I name the member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Wilson: In addition, we put \$3 million in in March, which is new money that Dr Smith didn't have last year, and the money we put in last year is money he didn't have the year before. Also, the finance minister announced \$2.1 million for this area in the recent budget, which will give us a network. Hamilton has very long waiting lists but they are shorter in other parts of the province. Like our cardiac network, we're going to establish a computer system so that the surgeons can put everybody into that system and they can get faster services in areas where there is more capacity. For the short term, it will mean that some patients have to travel. We will look after that, but it is one way to use the capacity we have in the rest of the system so that all the pressure isn't on the Hamilton hospitals.

1450

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have another question to the Minister of Labour. Today there were leaders from five major public sector unions who came here to Queen's Park to accept the offer your Premier made to extend to public sector workers the same agreement that your government made with Ontario's doctors. Until now, your government has refused to give public sector workers the same respect and treatment, in terms of process and in terms of dollars, that you have now given to Ontario doctors. It's interesting: All that process and money flowed after the doctors threatened to withdraw services.

Minister, my question is this: When your Premier made that offer, was he being sincere or was he just being Mr Silly?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I'm sure that when the statement was made the Premier certainly was quite sincere in his comments and —

Mr Christopherson: I would have liked to hear the "and" part. Let's give you an opportunity to clarify this a bit. The Premier is away today, and that's understandable; these things happen. The labour leaders left their cards at the Premier's office. They're prepared to meet. What I would like from you, Minister, since we're talking about labour negotiations, is, will you today on behalf of your government commit to ensuring that there's a meeting between these labour leaders and your Premier? It looks to me like we're close to a deal. The labour leaders believe that the offer the doctors got would be better for their members than anything else they've heard from you, and if your Premier is offering that package, I think we might have something here. Will you commit today to ensure that your Premier meets with these labour leaders so we can get close to ratifying the agreement he's offered?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'll just complete what I was going to say. The point I wanted to make and that maybe you're not aware of is the fact that the doctors got absolutely no increase in wages. I think it's extremely important that you have that information.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, about Tourism Awareness Week in Ontario. As you're aware from my statement earlier this week, Tourism Awareness Week was kicked off in my riding by the Premier last Saturday. I am sure you're aware of the economic importance of tourism in my riding. I can tell you that the people in Muskoka-Georgian Bay are all gearing up for this year's tourism season. But in other parts of the province there may not be an awareness of the economic importance of this particular industry. Can you advise the House how the tourism industry impacts in Ontario economically?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'd like to respond to the very good question from the member for Muskoka-

Georgian Bay. I'd preface my response by saying that this is Tourism Awareness Week. It's the first time any attempt has been made, over the last five years at least, to feature tourism at all during the course of a year, so it's a very special week.

There are six key messages I'd like to give to the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay and for his constituents and other people in Ontario. First of all, there are 413,000 people who have jobs in tourism. That's a large number. The wages and salaries of the tourism industry total \$9.4 billion. Overall it's a \$13.6-billion industry for this province. Fourth, it generates \$2 billion in tax revenues for the province. Item 5 I'd like to mention is that there are 66,000 businesses in tourism; and number 6, often tourism is the first job many people have as they start their careers.

Mr Grimmett: My supplementary relates to the impact of tourism in northern Ontario. This Saturday I have the opportunity to welcome Santa Claus back to his summer home in Bracebridge. But during the winter no doubt he spends part of his time in northern Ontario, and I'm sure there are people in northern Ontario who are interested in how our government is dealing with tourism issues in the north. Does northern Ontario get the benefits from tourism that our government can get for it?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm very happy to know that Santa Claus has arrived again and has been properly received.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I can see the humour over there.

But there is a very serious answer to this question. There are 26,000 tourism jobs in northern Ontario. It is a \$1-billion industry to the north. Tourism provides 7.3% of the total employment in the north. When we look at the north's natural wonders, they are the major draws for tourists in northern Ontario. The major activities tourists participate in are visiting the magnificent parks, camping, hunting and fishing. It really is a wilderness experience in the north. Part of our government's new resource-based tourism policy that we have just announced perfectly reflects what is available in the north.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today you announced Ontario Works, which will extend workfare to sole-support parents with children in school. As you know, children are in school about eight months of the year and, as you also know, there will be other requirements for child care.

Your own Minister of Finance was on national television admitting that last year's budget for child care was indeed not spent; that it was changed this time around to tax credits, which will allow unregulated, unlicensed child care paid for by government.

In Metro Toronto alone there is a waiting list of 8,500 individuals on social assistance who need child care; in fact, that has been what is preventing them from getting into the workforce. Your announcement today concerns adding these individuals to workfare. Tell me how these

spaces are suddenly going to be created when your own government has admitted to being a complete failure in the area of child care.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): This government admitted no such thing. What the finance minister was talking about was the additional, new money we have put into child care in this province. That's what is going to low-income parents who have great difficulty affording any kind of child care, regulated or unregulated. That's why they need extra support.

I'd also like to remind the honourable member that the reason the full child care budget was not spent was not because the province was not committed to it but because our 80 cents was on the table. As you know, we cost-share with municipalities. We pay 80%, they pay 20%. Unfortunately, our 80 cents for those fee subsidies were there on the table but the municipalities, for many reasons, were not able to pick up the 20 cents and therefore people on the waiting lists were still there.

That's one reason we are changing how we're delivering child care in this province, so we can stop that problem. That's one reason we're making it a mandatory service for municipalities, so we can actually meet the needs of more parents who need child care to get jobs and to stay in the workforce.

Mrs Pupatello: The minister raises a very interesting example about what ultimately will ruin a program, and that is that the municipalities are not prepared to enforce this mandated program by the province. You don't have a computer system in place, and won't for two years, to even track this. You will have more fraud and abuse than you have currently because you don't have a system in place.

We saw the dismal failure of your family support program, which only involved 150,000, which is a huge number of families out there. We would have fired that man if this indeed were run as a business, as you say. In this instance you're talking about some 500,000 families. I'd like to see exactly how you expect to have this. You cannot operate in isolation.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mrs Pupatello: My question is this: The Ministry of Ed is cutting adult education. The very things that are the criteria for Ontario Works are things your own —

The Speaker: Thank you.

1500

Hon Mrs Ecker: To the honourable member, with all due respect, I'm having difficulty getting the focus of her question. First of all, the Ontario Works legislation does indeed have resources to help people on the system who need supports like training. There will be programs for people who need training so they can get off welfare. That's what they want to do. That's certainly what the program is planned to do.

Second, the new legislation we are bringing in is to fully implement what is already happening out there. Municipalities currently deliver half the welfare system. They're currently the level that's delivering Ontario Works. Many of those municipalities are also handling the caseload of sole-support parents. There is nothing

new about that. Ontario is the only province that has this very wasteful and duplicative two-level delivery system, where you've got two levels of government in it. No other province does it that way, because they recognize it wastes a lot of money.

The Speaker: Answer, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Municipalities are quite capable of delivering welfare. They've been involved in the system for about 100 years. We're quite prepared to work with them as we make this program fight fraud —

The Speaker: Thank you.

SPECIALTY STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question to the Minister of Economic Development. The minister knows, and I advised his office on March 20 when the news broke, about the bankruptcy of Sammi, a Korean-based company and the owner of Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland, that the future of Atlas Specialty Steels and its almost 1,000 jobs is very much at risk. I'd like to ask the minister what he and his government have been doing to ensure a future for Atlas Specialty Steels in Ontario in view of the major employment component they provide and the important part they are of the Ontario economy.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): In response to the question from the member for Welland-Thorold, I'd like to say that first of all we are concerned about the uncertainty this whole situation has created. Any time jobs are threatened, of course this government is concerned, just as the member is.

The Canadian company has filed for protection against its creditors. It has until July 15, 1997, to complete its negotiations and to file a plan which might allow it to carry on.

Both Canadian operations of this company have been profitable for the last three years, both in Welland and the branch in Quebec. I can tell the member that our ministry has been keeping in close contact on a regular basis with the company to monitor just what their progress is in finding a solution to this rather difficult problem. I can only say to him that we are keeping in close contact and will continue to do that. I feel that's what should be done.

Mr Kormos: I've got a petition here signed by thousands and thousands and thousands of Niagarans that appeals to this government to make a commitment to assist in support of Atlas Specialty Steels in Welland to ensure that this important facility remains open.

The minister knows the Quebec government promptly came forward and initiated assistance to the Tracy, Quebec, plant of Atlas Steels. I'm asking this minister why this government won't become as actively involved as the government of Quebec. July 15 is about a month away. If it is going to become actively involved, can we be assured of that active participation in ensuring the future of Atlas Steels? Can we be assured of that today?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm happy to respond to the supplementary question. First of all, back in early April, April 7 to be exact, my ministry did have a meeting with Sammi Atlas to discuss the situation. We did set up a

meeting with the member, but that meeting didn't come off because the member did not show. He probably had reasons for that. All I can say to the member is that it's important for me to tell him that I will undertake to arrange a meeting with him and the company and my ministry. I also would like to tell him that we will continue to investigate —

Mr Kormos: You're full of it, Saunderson. That's a bloody lie. You son of a bitch. You pathetic piece.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Welland-Thorold, I'll ask you to withdraw that right now, please.

Mr Kormos: That's a bloody lie, Speaker.

The Speaker: I name the member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: This minister was given notice of this question today, and he knows full well that he acknowledged to me earlier that no meeting had been set up.

The Speaker: You are named.

Mr Kormos: You're a pathetic, miserable, lying son of a bitch.

The Speaker: I ask the member for Welland-Thorold to leave the chamber.

Mr Kormos: You are a real case, Saunderson. You told me right here when you sat with me —

The Speaker: Order. Member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Kormos: — that there hadn't been arrangements for a meeting, that you would agree to one, and one hadn't been set up yet. You told me that right here, as you sat beside me 10 minutes ago, and then you try to play a game like that.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Mr Speaker, he should be removed.

The Speaker: I appreciate your help, member for Halton North.

Member for Welland-Thorold, if you won't leave now, force will be necessary.

Mr Kormos: You're a lying bastard.

Mr Kormos was escorted from the chamber.

Hon Mr Saunderson: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege: After that outburst, I would just like to clarify something for the House. I had been informed that a meeting had been arranged with the member and my ministry —

The Speaker: With the greatest respect, Minister, you still have time left in your answer. I suggest that if you'd like to, you can raise it at that time, simply because that's not a point of privilege.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I will finish my answer. I said to the member I would undertake to arrange a meeting with him and the company and my ministry. That is not a difficult thing to arrange. Also, we will continue to monitor the situation and find where the matter stands at the present time. I would certainly get back to the member if anything is learned that he is not aware of. That is my answer.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the minister be given the opportunity to correct the record.

The Speaker: You're asking for unanimous consent?

Mr Wildman: I seek unanimous consent to give the minister the opportunity to correct the record.

The Speaker: The member for Algoma has requested unanimous consent for the minister to correct the record. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I would like to clarify something. I was concerned about this situation, and still am. I was told by my ministry that a meeting had been arranged between officials in the ministry and the member. I was told that for some reason, as I said in the House, the meeting did not occur, for various reasons.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): That's not what you said.

Mr Wildman: That's not what you said. You said he didn't show.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): Let him finish.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I think it was possible that perhaps the member could not attend. I did not say anything that I thought was detrimental; I was only stating a fact. I reiterate what I am offering, and that is to meet with the member and the company and ministry officials. If the member takes offence at what I said, it's unfortunate, but I meant exactly what I said.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition from hundreds of women across Ontario about the family support plan and the harm which has been caused thereby as a result of the AG's bungling of this situation. It reads:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mike Harris and Charles Harnick promised to improve the family support program; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution that 'government should concentrate its efforts on tracking down deadbeat parents and enforcing payment orders'; and

"Whereas the closure of the family support plan's regional offices has caused a decrease of quality service and lengthened delays; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to provide for better enforcement of support orders;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris reopen the regional offices and guarantee adequate staffing numbers to provide accessible, quality services to recipients and their children."

It reads, "Please return to CWAG, Community Women's Advisory Group" from Simcoe, Ontario. I affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

1510

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition here from seniors in my community against the Mike Harris prescription user fees.

"Whereas the government of Mike Harris has broken its pre-election promise not to impose user fees on health care;

"Whereas the user fees imposed by the Harris government on prescription drugs are causing low-income seniors grave hardship;

"Whereas the vast majority of seniors have worked very hard and have paid taxes for decades;

"Whereas seniors are most concerned that this will be the beginning of more and more user fees on health care;

"We, the undersigned, totally oppose the Mike Harris prescription user fees for seniors and petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the Mike Harris government place a moratorium on all health care user fees for seniors."

I affix my name to this petition. I totally agree with the seniors in opposing user fees.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by hundreds of members of OPSEU and forwarded to me by Leah Casselman, the president of OPSEU. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper, Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injury and occupational diseases;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further, we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the government of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provisions on quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules for the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and retain rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in total agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CLINICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by citizens from across the province: Sault Ste Marie, Kingston, Fort Frances, Nepean, Ottawa and other communities.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) provide high-quality professional medical, hygiene and ergonomic services to employers, workers, joint health and safety committees and their communities; and

"Whereas the professional services that the Ministry of Labour once provided are being offloaded to organizations such as the Occupational Health Clinics for

Ontario Workers, increasing the demand for the services provided by OHCOW; and

"Whereas the professional and technical expertise and advice provided by OHCOW have made a significant contribution to improvements to workplace health and safety as well as the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the government to maintain the funding of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers and oppose any attempt to alter the governance structure or erode the professional and technical services of OHCOW; and

"Further, we, the undersigned, demand that OHCOW be provided with the necessary funds to allow expansion into other Ontario communities in order to provide the professional and technical services needed to reduce occupational injuries, illnesses and deaths."

On behalf of my caucus colleagues, I add my name to theirs.

WATER CHLORINATION

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the chemical substance chlorine was added to the people of Milton's pure water well water supply in 1995; and

"Whereas the Halton region water delivery system in the town of Milton has received the regular maintenance and standard upgrade requirements outlined by the province and is supported by a standby chlorination unit sufficient enough to prevent the spread of a serious bacterial threat; and

"Whereas recent studies on the use of chlorine additives in drinking water have raised the spectre of chlorine as a possible cancer agent; and

"Whereas the people of the town of Milton overwhelmingly supported the belief that a standby chlorination requirement is sufficient enough to prevent the spread of a serious bacterial threat;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that the Ontario government grant the people of Milton's request for a variance allowing only standby chlorination to be used in treating the pure water wells supplying Milton's water delivery system."

I'm pleased to add my name to this list.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have hundreds and hundreds of petitions that I'd like to read into the record. They are entitled "Stop Megacity Madness: Citizens Have Democratic Right to Be Heard."

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas 'bigger government is not better' and the Mike Harris government has no right to dictate a megacity upon the citizens of Metro Toronto;

"Whereas the megacity is being imposed on 2.3 million citizens in Metro Toronto without giving people a voice in the future of their cities and neighbourhoods;

"Whereas a megacity could lead to mega property tax increases, mega user fees and mega cuts in services;

"Whereas the Tories never proposed abolishing local government in favour of bigger government during the election campaign;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To give the 2.3 million people in Metro Toronto a say in the future of their cities and stop the imposition of megacity."

I affix my name to this petition, and I fully agree with their intention.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by hundreds of members of CEP. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government will introduce legislation to amend the Workers' Compensation Act and distribute a discussion paper about changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the expected change include erosion of the right to refuse unsafe work; that workers will be forced to apply to their employer for WCB benefits; that employers will decide if the claim is valid; reduction in power of the joint health and safety committees; and the elimination of compensation for certain injuries and diseases; and

"Whereas the Workers' Compensation Act is a vital protection for all workers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act has prevented untold numbers of accidents and saved thousands from illness and diseases;

"Therefore, we the undersigned demand full public hearings throughout the province of Ontario on the Workers' Compensation Act proposed changes" — which the government is not doing to the full extent of their commitment — "no changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, workers' right to refuse and joint health and safety committees."

I add my name to theirs with a great deal of pride.

1520

RENT REGULATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government of Mike Harris has brought forth Bill 96, legislation which will effectively kill rent control in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Conservative campaign literature during the York South by-election stated that rent control will continue; and

"Whereas tenant groups, students and seniors have pointed out that this legislation will hurt those that cannot least afford it, as it will cause higher rents across most markets in Ontario; and

"Whereas this Mike Harris proposal will make it easier for residents to be evicted from retirement care homes and

"Whereas the Liberal caucus continues to believe that all tenants, and particularly the vulnerable in our society who live on fixed incomes, deserve the assurance of a maximum rent cap;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the Mike Harris government scrap its proposal to abandon and eliminate rent control and instead introduce legislation which will protect tenants in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have further petitions regarding occupational health and safety signed by CAW members across the province and forwarded to me by their national president, Buzz Hargrove.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper, Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

I add my name to theirs.

HOTEL DIEU HOSPITAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the government of Ontario:

"Since the Hotel Dieu Hospital has played and continues to play a vital role in the delivery of health care services in St Catharines and the Niagara region; and

"Since Hotel Dieu has modified its role over the years as part of a rationalization of medical services in St Catharines and has assumed the position of a regional health care facility in such areas as kidney dialysis and oncology; and

"Since the Niagara region is experiencing underfunding in the health care field and requires more medical services and not fewer services; and

"Since Niagara residents are required at present to travel outside of the Niagara region to receive many specialized services that could be provided in city hospitals and thereby not require local patients to make difficult and inconvenient trips down our highways to other centres; and

"Since the Niagara hospital restructuring committee used a Toronto consulting firm to develop its recommendations and was forced to take into account a cut of over \$40 million in funding for Niagara hospitals when carrying out its study; and

"Since the population of the Niagara region is older than that in most areas of the province and more elderly people tend to require more hospital services;

"We, the undersigned, request that the government of Ontario keep the election commitment of Premier Mike Harris not to close hospitals in our province, and we call upon the Premier to reject any recommendation to close Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines."

I affix my signature because I am in complete agreement with this petition.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I won't prolong this. All of us in this House understand that this place can only operate effectively if there is a spirit of cooperation among the parties. I know that members on the front bench on the other side understand that, so I raise with you a problem that must be occurring with regard to the government mail service that serves this place.

I did not receive an invitation from the Solicitor General to the opening of the Anishinabek police headquarters in Garden River First Nation in my riding, where he is this afternoon. I'm sure he would not have wanted to leave out the local member, considering the fact that I am the former minister responsible for native affairs who helped to fund this service. I'm certain the mistake must be in the mail service, that it didn't arrive at my office in time to notify me.

I hope that you as Speaker would deal with the government members and ensure that the mail service is operating correctly, and if the minister has some problem with the telephones in his office, that he will check that out as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): Member for Algoma, even though you have concluded, it's really not a point of personal privilege. The purview of the mail service is not the direct responsibility of the Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM ACT, 1997

LOI DE 1997 SUR LA RÉFORME DE L'AIDE SOCIALE

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to revise the law related to Social Assistance by enacting the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, by repealing the Family Benefits Act, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act and the General Welfare Assistance Act and by amending several other Statutes / Projet de loi 142, Loi révisant la loi relative à l'aide sociale en édictant la Loi sur le programme Ontario au travail et la Loi sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées, en abrogeant la Loi sur les prestations familiales, la

Loi sur les services de réadaptation professionnelle et la Loi sur l'aide sociale générale et en modifiant plusieurs autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary L. Leadston): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Minister?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): No, that's fine, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Orders of the day.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): Just before I give the orders of the day, on behalf of everybody here I congratulate you on your fine efforts last night.

Interjection: Do you want to explain that?

Hon David Johnson: Do I want to explain that any more or not?

The Acting Speaker: It was a group effort.

Hon David Johnson: We deal with the 30th order.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

JOB GROWTH AND TAX REDUCTION ACT, 1997 LOI DE 1997 SUR LA CROISSANCE DE L'EMPLOI ET LA RÉDUCTION DES IMPÔTS

Ms Bassett, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to stimulate job growth, to reduce taxes and to implement other measures contained in the 1997 Budget / Projet de loi 129, Loi visant à stimuler la croissance de l'emploi, à réduire les impôts et à mettre en oeuvre d'autres mesures mentionnées dans le budget de 1997.

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I'm happy to speak on Bill 129 this afternoon. This bill implements several important measures of our plan to put Ontario back on the road to prosperity and to make this province one of the best places in the world to live, to work and to invest.

On May 6, the Minister of Finance introduced a budget that invests in Ontario's future while at the same time investing in today by creating a climate in which people can build their own lives and the private sector can get on with the business of creating jobs.

Bill 129 delivers on the commitments reiterated in the 1997 budget to cut taxes to stimulate the economy and to create a climate for job growth. It delivers on our government's commitments to invest in research and development, to eliminate costly overlap and duplication, and to make Ontario communities safer for our children.

The best job creation program is a tax cut. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business calls a tax cut "the only way you are going to get consumers spending again." We too have always said that if Ontarians are allowed to keep more of the money they earn, they will spend it. This stimulates economic activity and creates jobs.

Bill 129 implements the next steps of our personal income tax cut. It reduces Ontario's personal income tax rate from 49% to 48% of basic federal tax for 1997 and to 45% of basic federal tax for 1998. It also adjusts the fair share health care levy to reflect the change in income tax rates. As promised to the people of Ontario, we are delivering on the 30% tax cut that we promised earlier on.

This government is creating an environment which is attracting new investment to our province and creating value-added jobs. Taxes should not discourage research and development and job creation. Why not, you say? In the last 10 years, two out of every three jobs created in this province were in the information and technology sector, but Ontario invests only 2% of its GDP in research. Our government will do better.

To encourage research and development, Bill 129 implements the sales tax exemption for machinery, equipment and processing materials used in both manufacturing and research and development.

To encourage medical research in Ontario, Bill 129 extends the sales tax exemption to include equipment used for research and investigation purchased by non-profit medical research institutions.

We will ensure that important sectors of our economy receive the support they deserve.

In order to help Ontario farmers and stimulate the rural economy, Bill 129 extends to March 31, 1998, the sales tax rebate to farmers for materials used in farm structures. This reduces their costs when building or improving their farming facilities. As the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has said, "What better place to grow Ontario's economy than on our farms?"

In order to continue to support the construction industry and assist families, Bill 129 also extends the land transfer tax rebate to March 1998. As of May 30, 1997, there have been 13,466 applications for this program, and over \$16 million in land transfer tax has been refunded.

We are ensuring safer communities and a better future for our children as well. In addition to many other initiatives to protect children, this bill doubles fines for selling or supplying liquor to a minor and allowing a minor to consume liquor on licensed premises. It also doubles fines for selling or supplying tobacco to a minor.

The members of this House know full well that our government has been active for more than a year in strengthening the securities regulatory system. In last year's budget, the Minister of Finance announced that we were pursuing the creation of a national securities commission. We have devoted significant resources over the last 12 months to achieving an agreement which has laid the foundation for the creation of the Canadian Securities Commission.

In November of last year the minister also made a commitment to provide the Ontario Securities Commission with the tools it needs to ensure that we maintain our position as the leading capital market in Canada and one of the very best in the world. We are keeping that commitment. Bill 129 will ensure that the OSC has the resources necessary to carry out its mandate. It changes the OSC into a self-funding crown agency and frees it from civil service hiring and pay restraints. It also

reduces regulatory fees that undermine the competitiveness of our capital market.

We are building a better, stronger, better-funded regulatory system to enhance consumer protection and in order to make it easier for business to raise capital and to create jobs. This government is on track for a balanced budget by the year 2000-01. That is not just our view — the Dominion Bond Rating Service has confirmed that the province of Ontario is on track to meet our deficit elimination target.

With Bill 129, we are keeping our promises, following our plan and making changes that will result in a better tomorrow for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gary Leadston): Questions and comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I am particularly intrigued by the last comment of the government speaker because I look at the information and the news releases from the Dominion Bond Rating Service and Standard and Poor's, and they're giving the same rating to this government that they gave to the government of Bob Rae and the NDP. I can well remember, as my friend from Hamilton Centre will, the outrage which was expressed on the other side of the House by Mike Harris and other Conservatives at the fact that this rating was as it is. We don't see any higher rating. I see AA-, A- or A-1+ and so on. This is the same rating the Bob Rae government got.

I suspect it's because Standard and Poor's and the Dominion Bond Rating Service are worried that you are borrowing money to finance a tax cut. A lot of people don't know that. Not only are you drastically cutting services, which must really worry the member for Huron, who is here today smiling — it must really worry her. That's the progressive people, like the Conservatives. What about the Reformers out there who worry about the debt going up? Because the debt is increasing, and the reason it's increasing is you're borrowing more money to give a tax cut.

Who benefits from that the most? The richest people in our society, the people who go to the Albany Club, the people who go away on expensive vacations, who have money to put away in different things. I am worried about that, because I think this deficit could be eliminated earlier if you wouldn't squander the money on tax breaks for the richest people in our society. I know you'll want to change your mind on that.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to take the two minutes I have to respond to the comments of the parliamentary assistant, particularly when she mentioned in the very closing of her remarks — and I wrote this down when she said it — that they're doing all these things so there'll be "a better tomorrow for all Ontarians." I don't know who the parliamentary assistant believes is "all Ontarians," but it sure isn't the poor, because you went after the poor in your first months in office and cut their take-home pay, the mere amount they get to survive on, by 22%.

It's not the poor you speak of when you say "all Ontarians," and it's sure not public sector OPSEU workers who as a result of your anti-worker Bill 7 will

see their jobs eliminated through privatization because you took away all their collective agreement protection.

It sure isn't injured workers, because you're cutting the income of injured workers from 90% to 85% at the same time you're cutting the premiums your corporate pals pay by the same 5%. It's sure not the hospital workers, the municipal workers and the school board employees, who are now affected by your announced legislation this week, Bill 136, through which you're basically going to eliminate the ability of those workers and their unions to negotiate a fair collective agreement. When we talk about the private sector workers, by the time they're finished paying copayments, user fees and increased property taxes, they aren't included either.

Parliamentary Assistant, when you say you're making a better tomorrow for all Ontarians, why don't you tell it like it is? Why don't you say you're making a better Ontario for all your pals?

1540

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I want to commend the member for St Andrew-St Patrick on her support of this bill. I too am very happy to support this bill. I guess there will never be any support from the two opposition parties, who are just ideologically totally opposed to the position of our government. I respect their right to be different and to have their opinions, but at the moment the opinions of the people of this province support our government. What we are doing with this legislation today is implementing the promises we made when we campaigned two years ago and won 82 seats of 130. That is an endorsement from the people of this province that they agree with the direction our government is going.

Frankly, I'm really happy that we have 130,000 people today who are no longer on welfare and support assistance in this province. I know some of those people, constituents of mine, who are happy they no longer have to depend on the income tax that other people who are working pay to support them. They want to be contributors to their own income and the support of their families.

The sad thing is that we have this role in Parliament where we have government and opposition — that's how our democracy is established — so that even when we have good legislation and the results of good policies which our government has been implementing for the past two years, where we're now able to say we are creating a tremendously healthy uplift in the economy and all the jobs that come with it, in spite of all that good news the role of the opposition is to criticize and disagree. That's purely what we will hear for the rest of this afternoon's debate.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to say I do disagree with the government. I fundamentally disagree with you. I again refer to the independent credit rating agencies, the very respected organizations that say to you, "You're putting Ontario's fiscal health and fiscal future at risk." They looked at the numbers, they looked at all your projections, and they said: "We're not going to upgrade the province's credit rating. We think the tax cut is putting the fiscal house at risk."

I disagree with what you're doing. Every penny of this tax cut is borrowed money. We're going to give \$500 million of a tax cut to people in this province making \$250,000 a year. We're going to go and borrow every penny of that and we're going to pay 8% interest on that so they can get a tax cut worth \$500 million.

Interjection: Wrong.

Mr Phillips: The member says "Wrong." I am quoting. I checked the other day. These are the government numbers: \$500 million to people making more than \$250,000 a year.

I go on to say on this tax bill that the member for Mississauga South may be very proud that for four consecutive years you have cut the tax deduction for people with disabilities. They're the ones you're going after in this budget. This budget implements the fourth consecutive year of cuts for deductions for people with disabilities. The members are looking incredulous here, but that is the fact. You are going to vote on that bill later today. For the fourth consecutive time you have cut the tax deduction for persons with disabilities. If you don't understand that, check the bill.

The government has determined to implement this tax cut that benefits the richest and penalizes the most vulnerable.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Andrew-St Patrick.

Ms Bassett: I'd like to first of all thank the participation of the members on the opposite side of the House and the member for Mississauga South.

Of course I will reply to the member for St Catharines. I'm not surprised that he would be against the tax cut; that has been his stand consistently and, as the member for Mississauga South pointed out, we expect that.

We feel that our tax cut is going to benefit everybody in turn. The member for Hamilton Centre said I was talking about all Ontarians. Well, I am referring to all Ontarians, because I feel you can't exclude one portion of Ontarians who may be less fortunate economically speaking, because with the wealth and the job creation we bring in, the general level in society will help everybody. There's no question about that.

As to the reference to the Dominion Bond Rating Service, I want to point out that in the last Liberal government, in 1988, Ontario's credit rating was put on a rating alert by DBRS, as I'm sure you remember, and during the NDP era, Ontario's rating was downgraded three times. Following their review of Ontario's 1997 budget, S&P and other rating agencies expressed their confidence in Ontario's management of Ontario's finances. They believe that Ontario's economic and fiscal assumptions are prudent and conservative and they expect that the province will meet its 1997-98 fiscal targets.

Ontario is indeed open for business and, as Bill 129 makes clear, we are bringing in measures to ensure that this happens.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget bill, Bill 129. I would like unanimous consent to split my time between myself, Mr Colle and Mr Bradley.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you to the House.

This is an interesting bill and it gives us a chance to have further debate on the budget. I would just say, as the member for Mississauga South said earlier, there is a fundamental disagreement. You have your views, strongly held, and frankly you won an election on them, so you do have the authority to implement your agenda. You don't have the authority to implement it without debate or without the opposition speaking on behalf of the people out there who may not agree with you or certainly would want other views represented. We do have fundamental disagreements.

I will start with perhaps the major part of the bill, and that is the tax cut. I understand that it's very popular to say to people, "We'll give you a tax cut." I would just remind us, as the government member said in opening the debate, that the government doesn't plan to balance the budget until the year 2000-01. On March 31, 2001, the budget will be balanced. Over that period of time, we are obviously going to run significant deficits.

As a matter of fact, in the budget you'll see that from 1995 when you got elected until you balance the budget, the debt of the province is going to go up \$30 billion. It took the first 110 years of the province to accumulate a \$30-billion debt, and Mike Harris is going to, in his first mandate, increase the debt by \$30 billion.

1550

I acknowledge that you inherited a significant deficit, but the question is this: If this is such a serious problem that we have to close hospitals, that we have to cut funding for education, that you have to put on user fees for seniors, if it's such a serious problem that everybody in Ontario must struggle and suffer to reduce the deficit, tell me again how we can afford a tax cut.

I asked just the other day, "Are these still the right figures?" because these are the government figures: People making more than \$250,000 are going to be getting \$500 million of the tax break. This budget cuts the benefits of people with disabilities, for four consecutive years cuts their benefits. Why? Presumably to help fund that tax cut for people making more than a quarter of a million dollars.

I say to my business friends, "The government has to go and borrow every penny of this." In the budget they spell out very clearly the cost of the tax cut. How much is it? In 1996-97 dollars it's \$4.8 billion; when you annualize that it's \$5.5 billion. That's the cost of the tax cut. The government members say: "Yes, but it's funding itself. It's like a perpetual money machine." Well, what about the personal income tax revenue? This is straight out of the budget: In 1995-96 the personal income tax revenue in the province was \$16.3 billion; in 1996-97 it's \$15.6 billion; and in 1997-98 it's \$14.5 billion. Over two years, personal income tax revenue drops by roughly \$2 billion. This is in a growing economy when one would have expected it to be growing substantially, but the tax cuts, using the government's own numbers straight out of the budget, mean we have lost roughly \$2 billion in revenue from personal income tax. The government itself, in putting forward its estimates, said: "What is the revenue impact of the tax cut? Five and a half billion dollars."

That's point one. If this deficit is such a dragon that it has to be slain — all of us agree we have to get our fiscal house in order, but everybody out there is saying: "I don't understand. If I'm on social assistance and my payments are cut by 20% because the province can't afford it, okay. If I'm a student in a classroom, my classes are larger." In every single school board in this province, classes are larger now than they were two years ago. Why? Because the government is saying we have to cut spending there. So if the deficit is such a big problem, how in the world can we afford this \$5.5-billion tax cut? And does it make sense to go out and borrow all that money?

That's what Standard and Poor's and Dominion Bond Rating Service have said. By the way, in 1990, every single rating agency rated Ontario at the highest possible level, and now, both the rating agencies that have commented on the government's fiscal plans have said: "No, we're not prepared to upgrade Ontario's credit rating. We are going to leave it exactly the same as Bob Rae had, because we've got some significant concerns about the future."

The second thing the budget does and this bill implements is the downloading, the dumping on to municipalities. I have been mildly surprised at the response by the organization called AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, because there is no question that what the government has done is dump roughly \$660 million of brand-new costs on to property taxes. That \$660 million alone is about a 5% increase in property taxes. That's part of the budget. That is how the government is funding its tax cut, to dump huge costs — we saw today where the government has dumped another \$850 million of social assistance on to property tax; \$905 million, approaching \$1 billion, of social housing. Incredible. Seniors' housing — well over half of social housing is seniors — was dumped on to property taxes. I think it will cause untold problems in the future in Ontario.

As I say, I'm just amazed that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario isn't up in arms. They will be, because I guarantee you a year from now when the property tax implementation hits — and today we heard, astonishingly, the minister responsible for small business doesn't understand the property tax bill. He thinks the bill allows municipalities to offer a different tax rate on small business versus large business. The bill doesn't do that.

The minister responsible for small business, I couldn't believe it, said today the bill permitted lower taxes on small business. The property tax bill doesn't. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has indicated their grave concerns about this. I was surprised at the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs saying today that the rural community is very happy about the dumping of \$175 million of costs on to the rural municipalities.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): So the rurals are happy and AMO is happy.

Mr Phillips: There's the Minister of Municipal Affairs saying — AMO begged us to change that property tax bill. They said, "Don't let it go through." I'm surprised the Minister of Municipal Affairs doesn't know that, when AMO begged us to change it. But you wouldn't

change it. The Minister of Municipal Affairs does not understand. You did not change the property tax bill. They said, "Guarantee the funding for municipalities."

As a matter of fact, we moved an amendment in the bill to do that, as did the NDP, by the way, almost identical amendments to guarantee it. What has happened, and the public should recognize this, is the province has wiped its hands of the farm tax rebate plan, \$175 million. But surprise, surprise. Do you know who's going to pay for that? The property taxpayers in rural municipalities. It's all going on them, \$175 million on rural property taxpayers.

The province puffs its chest up and says: "We are the friends of the farm community. We have gotten rid of the farm tax rebate program. We've gone to a simpler program." Oh, they did that, but it's no longer being paid for by the province, but by the municipalities. I guarantee you, if the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn't read the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's brief begging us to get that bill changed — well, the government wouldn't listen to us. They just went ahead and did it anyway. That's part of this budget.

When small business has the full impact when you load something called the business occupancy tax back on to them disproportionately, and when the rural property taxpayers recognize they're being given the bill for the province's old farm tax rebate plan — in fact the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is worried about it. They say, "Listen, this is causing real friction between us and the rural municipalities." They were desperately trying to find a solution. The government didn't listen.

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As we implement this bill, remember this: The debt of the province is going up \$30 billion over Mike Harris's regime. The credit rating agencies have signalled their concern. They say their outlook depends on a stable economy. If anything happens to the economy, the rating's going to get worse. It isn't like they're making this on the worst-case scenario; they're making it on the best-case scenario.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'm shocked.

Mr Phillips: The member for Algoma is shocked. I think a lot of people are surprised.

The government is proud of something I don't think I would be proud of, and that is on jobs. Let's recognize a few facts: There are still more people out of work in Ontario today than when Mike Harris became Premier. They may be proud of that. The government is crowing every day about it. I would not be proud of it. I would not be proud of the fact that there are still more people out of work —

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Speaker for affording me the opportunity to assume a very brief period as Speaker this week, and I'd like to thank the table for their indulgence and for all their assistance.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I appreciate the job the previous Speaker did, and the current Speaker, I might say.

On the job front, we get into this debate on the numbers. The fact is there are more people out of work

in Ontario today than when Mike Harris became Premier. I can remember, in the Common Sense Revolution he was just railing about that. "There are more than half a million people unemployed in this province. The bottom line is that Ontario needs jobs." Well, there are more people unemployed today than when Mike Harris became Premier a year and a few days ago. Yes, there are more jobs, but for heaven's sake, we're in a growing population, everybody. We need to create 75,000 jobs a year just to stand still.

Mike Harris said that by now we'd have 278,000 jobs.

Mr Wildman: Yes, that's what he said.

Mr Phillips: That's what he said. We're 116,000 jobs short.

I might add that the most tragic thing is among young people. The unemployment rate among young people continues to grow. It was 18.5% in the first five months of 1997. Last year at the same time it was 16.3%. So up it goes. The unemployment rate among young people continues to rise. If you talk to the experts in the field, they'll say it's more like 30%.

I would just say to all of us, if the Conservative caucus want to simply accept the Premier's office's talking points, the Bill King talking points, the stuff they send you, "Use these as arguments" — I guess it's not Paul Rhodes any more but the Bill King talking notes — you can do that, but you are frankly ignoring a significant problem that's not going away, and that is on the job front. It's just not going to go away.

To begin talking about the detail of the bill, the first thing I want to comment on is the process around here. I've got a lot of friends in the business community and they always assume that the Conservatives must be business people. A lot of them are suits. I say to them, "If you think they're running government like a business, they give business a bad name."

I'll give you a specific example. If this bill does not pass by the last day of June, in a matter of three weeks, every trust company in this province is out of business. Hal Jackman will be broke. He's got his National Trust; it would be out of business. Canada Trust would be out of business. All trust businesses cease to operate at 12:01 on July 1.

Here we are debating a bill. We are probably about one-half hour into the debate on this bill. It has to be passed for second and third reading, a big important bill, and if it doesn't, every trust company in the province is out of business. Gone.

Is this any way to run an operation? It reminds me of coming to the Legislature for something called supply, which is essentially the authority to spend money, roughly two days before the cheques had to go out. If I were running a business and said, "Oh Jeez, I'm going to need a loan to meet the payroll. I didn't realize that. I'm going to have to go to the bank. I've only got two days to get it," the banks would laugh at me.

Here's an example where the trust companies are going to be out of business by July 1 unless we pass this bill. I call it a hostage trick. The government gets a hostage, they put it inside a bill and then they say, "If you don't pass the bill, we'll kill the hostage." The hostage here is the trust companies. There is a hostage in most bills. The

hostage phones us up, "Listen, pass this bill or I'm going to be killed," in this case, as I say. You've got us. We can't put the trust companies out of business and we won't. Gosh knows we respect those fine trust companies.

If the public are sitting there trying to make a judgment on the government as a sound, solid business operation, you couldn't run a business this way, as I say going to the bank two days before you need a huge loan and not even being able to meet your payroll, having a major part of your financial institutions at risk unless this bill passes. I will just say to all those trust companies, we in the Liberal caucus will do nothing that will jeopardize the future of the trust companies. It's only to illustrate the difficulty that one gets into here when they throw a hostage into each of these bills and then away we go.

The issue that seemed to catch some members here by surprise is the disability issue. Some of the Conservative members didn't seem to realize that this budget bill, for the fourth straight year, reduces the tax deduction of people with disabilities. It used to be roughly \$395, and in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 it's going down. I would have thought the last people you would want to be clawing back money from would be persons with disabilities, but I guess if you've got to fund the tax cut somewhere that's one way you find some resources. It surprised me to see that.

I was interested as well in the comment on tobacco, because the bill does increase the fines for tobacco violations. Maximum fines are going up very dramatically, I think, to \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 for corporations. The member presented it as, "This is going to really help stamp out sale of tobacco products to minors." I hope so. But if we think that's going to help, we should have some second thoughts, because the cosmetics of simply increasing the fines may make us feel better here. Why not make it \$1 billion if it's a problem.

I just assumed we're fining a bunch of people \$75,000 and that's not enough, that they're still flouting the law and we've got to get it up to \$150,000. But here I find out that last year there were — actually, this is on the liquor one; for selling liquor to minors, in this particular case, we're taking the fine up to \$300,000. In 1996-97 there were 214 convictions for fines, totalling \$53,000.

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My point is this: Sometimes we think maybe a cosmetic thing like an increase in fines will sell well when we're out there giving a speech about the size of fines, but obviously judges have levelled fines and right now they can level substantial fines. But in total, 214 convictions and the total fines of the 214 was \$53,000, so I don't think the problem is the size of the fines. The problem is elsewhere. The bill on the Liquor Licence Act may make us feel better, but it will in my opinion probably do very little in real terms. Anyway, let it go.

The securities commission: It's not totally clear what's intended here. We're very supportive of a strong securities commission. The securities commission in its last annual report signalled their real concern about their resources to deal with the securities environment here in Ontario. They said they simply didn't have enough resources to do it and the government was taking a substantial amount of money out of the securities com-

mission. They were earning fees of about \$20 million more a year than they were allowed to spend.

We're very supportive of strengthening the securities commission. I personally had hoped we'd be looking at some form of a national securities commission. I gather for a variety of reasons that it's been difficult to get that together. I would hope that by setting up this arm's-length independent securities commission, we don't preclude or make it more difficult to establish some form of a national securities commission. Here in Ontario we all understand our financial businesses are one of our key strengths, one of our major global industries, and whatever we can do to strengthen that, and obviously protect consumers at the same time, is important.

The thing I'm not sure of here is, do they have the authority under this to set their own budget? Part of the bill says the minister can pull surpluses out of the securities commission. Will it truly be an arm's-length agency?

In any event, we're supportive of a strengthened securities commission. They have been raising concerns for some time about their ability to deal effectively, and I think this is probably a good step forward. I hope it doesn't preclude in the future some form of national securities commission.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: I'm trying to ignore the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. He is grumbling about something. I'll try and move on the bill.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): The national securities commission is the worst thing we could ever —

Mr Phillips: He's barking about the national securities commission, the worst thing that could ever be done. I am one who has a broader view on financial institutions than just a small, narrow view.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Many of our financial institutions believe that. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Finance has often indicated that he's very supportive of it. He must have been overridden by the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale and he couldn't move forward with it. But Mr Eves has got my personal support for it. If he needs something in caucus to deal with the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, I can't help him, but some of the members behind might.

The reason I raise the securities commission is that it is important right now that they raise more money than they're allowed to spend. It's unclear in the legislation whether they will be allowed to set their own fees and set their own budgets.

The land transfer tax: This bill eliminates the different land transfer tax between residents and non-residents. That was brought in in 1974. As I recall, there was a substantial concern both about agricultural land being purchased by major corporations and turned into essentially — rather than the traditional family farm, we are looking at agriculture becoming much more like a big corporate business.

As I recall, I was told by the staff that one thing that drove it was a substantial purchase by an offshore company of a lot of land that concerned the rural communities. They said, "Listen, this is of concern to us, that we're going to see offshore companies purchasing large

amounts of farm land and turning it into quite a different environment than we've had in rural communities in Ontario."

But I gather the government has looked at that and they've concluded that is no longer a risk. In fact, I think that's the language they used with us, that it's no longer seen to be a risk. I would just hope that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has had a chance to look at this and reach the same conclusion as the government has, because we are now going back to the pre-1974 era; I gather the differential land transfer tax did have an effect and did slow down or eliminate the concerns a lot of people had.

Part of the tax issue for us is around how the province is going to set the educational mill rates, because to fund the tax cut in this bill and to balance the budget on March 31, 2001, a lot of costs are being loaded down on to the property tax. An unknown question for municipalities is going to be, because for the first time in the history of Ontario the province is going to set one third of the property tax mill rate — now the province has decided it's going to get its hands on property tax. It's the first time ever.

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): There's going to be fair funding to every child in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Huron, come to order.

Mr Phillips: So it's going to set the educational mill rates for businesses and for residential property tax. Roughly a quarter of your residential property tax will now be set by the province and about half of the business property tax will be set by the province.

We are anxiously awaiting how that's going to be done. Is the province planning to set a uniform mill rate across the province? That will be of interest to us. On businesses, that's what it's planning to do. We are getting a lot of calls from businesses that are worried, first, about their taxes going up because of the business occupancy tax coming off and they were paying a low business occupancy tax. They are going to be paying a much higher realty tax now. Over half of their business property tax goes to education. They're very worried about what the province is going to do there because now it's not going to be the local school board; it's going to be the province unilaterally, I guess, setting that province-wide mill rate.

You've got a very nervous group of people out there now worried about their property taxes, particularly when you take into account the combination of \$660 million of new costs being loaded on to them, the redistribution of something called the business occupancy tax, the knowledge that the province is determined to find money for their tax cut wherever they can. One of the ways you do that is by loading social housing on to property tax, and they see the same thing occurring in education.

You always hate to say, "I told you so," but I will say that a year from now — you can remember this conversation — I will be very interested in the response when people get their property tax bills from the I don't think particularly well-thought-through property tax legislation and all those things hitting them.

1620

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): Just do nothing, right?

Mr Phillips: The member says, "Do nothing." We had six amendments to the bill, all of which had broad community support. The government members simply voted them down. You say, "What would you do?" We spelled it all out for you.

Because we're dealing with the bill that sets the budget, I want to express my growing concern about the taxpayers' obligations on Highway 407. The impression that has been left with the public is that the tolls are going to cover the cost of this road, so don't worry about it. It is becoming increasingly clear that the taxpayers are the ones on the hook for this thing.

Mrs Johns: Who made the deal?

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that you asked that. The government is now two years into its operation. It has had plenty of time to look into these things and, if you didn't like the deal, to change them. But I gather the government has looked at the deal. They have accepted the deal. The Minister of Transportation has said it's a good deal.

I would just say this: It looks like the cost of this thing is going up. It's probably \$1.5 billion now. It looks like it's opening six months late. It looks like the tolls are going to cover less than half the cost of this road. It looks like the taxpayers are on the hook for the other half. That's what it looks like to me.

I drove the road. I think it's going to be quite neat. For some people, it will save a lot of time. I hope for the business community it will be particularly helpful, but I would just alert the taxpayers.

I remember when Mike Harris was in opposition, he had a lot to say about Highway 407. He was going to get this thing all straightened around. It's two years later now. He has had plenty of time to look at it and all we've really had are some more contracts awarded.

The reason I raise that is because this government is getting to the stage where some of these financial matters are going to come back to haunt you, and that's one of them. Another one, I might add, is that we're starting to get into a budget now that I am less confident reflects the real financial realities of the province. We'll see how that unfolds.

To go over the elements of the bill, we've expressed our significant concerns about the income tax portion of the bill. Every penny of this money for the tax cut is borrowed. That is absolutely clear. These are the government's numbers for borrowing.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Get the numbers from revenue.

Mr Phillips: Get the numbers for revenue? Personal: I see tax revenue dropping. In 1997-98, tax revenue down by \$600 million.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I'm looking at the budget. I can only assume the government is not trying to mislead us.

Mr Bradley: I hope not.

Mr Phillips: I would hope not too.

Tax revenue: 1996-97, \$38.1 billion; 1997-98, \$37.5 billion. That's \$600 million less. The government's own

numbers in this budget show tax revenue dropping by \$600 million, dropping dramatically, I might add, on the personal income tax side.

As the member said, when is Ontario going to have a balanced budget? March 31, 2001. We're borrowing all this money for the tax cut. These aren't my numbers. These are your own numbers, which I assume you're prepared to stand behind — revenue changes, budget impact — \$4.8 billion on the personal income tax cut, which moves up to \$5.5 billion in 1999.

You may think it's good fiscal policy to borrow that amount of money for the tax cut. You may think it's good fiscal policy to give people in this province who are making over \$250,000, \$500 million worth of a tax break. By the way, this is all after the health share levy. Why are we doing it? We're doing it, I guess, to reward those who are most well-off in the province. As I say, the irony of ironies is that at the very same time as we're doing that, we're actually cutting the deduction, for four consecutive years, for people with disabilities. It's almost unbelievable. Why would you punish people with disabilities and reward people who are making more than \$250,000? I just don't understand that.

Mr Wildman: Them that has, gets.

Mr Phillips: That's right. Someone said that maybe our problem is the rich don't have enough to spend and we've somehow or other got to solve that.

The member earlier in her remarks said that the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, was pleased with the budget. I would say that the CFIB is very worried about property tax and small business. I repeat what I said earlier: I was amazed the minister responsible for small business today said, "The bill allows municipalities to give a lower tax rate on small business." It doesn't. He doesn't know that. Who is speaking up for small business in the province? Who's at the cabinet table saying, "We've got to get this thing done?"

Mr Baird: He is the most pro-small business in government history.

Mr Phillips: He says, "Most pro-small business." We will anxiously await.

The member also mentioned the interest in technology and in the information era. A neat little surprise in the budget is taxes going way up on computers. In fact, the government's decided it's going to rake in another \$55 million by putting a tax on computer programs. I half-thought from the member's statements about how helpful this budget was going to be for R&D and technology — I didn't realize you were going to put another \$55 million of tax on computers. That one caught me by surprise, as did the \$150 million for making the tax system fairer.

I think most people know what that is: going after more people, and the tax increase on persons with disabilities. Those things frankly surprised us, that we would see in this bill an attack on persons with disabilities, an increase in taxes on computer programs of \$50 million, and the \$151 million for making the tax system fairer. Actually, I have the numbers on the disability, and it was \$395 per person down now to \$325. As I say, that caught us a bit by surprise.

I want to once again indicate, particularly for the backbench members, how irritating it can be to us to be

given a bill and then be told, "Listen, if you don't pass this thing in three weeks, all these companies are going to go out of business." It's the hostage. If the government wonders why we sometimes get angry about what we regard as bully tactics, how would you feel? You say we should have a nice, reasoned debate about this tax policy that's going to impact everybody and then we find we're being told we have to pass the bill in three weeks — look at the agenda — with virtually no debate or else all these businesses go out of business.

Just so we don't alarm anybody out there, it will pass. The doors aren't going to close on any trust company.

1630

Mr Baird: Give, give, give.

Mr Wildman: The spirit of cooperation.

Mr Phillips: It's the a spirit of cooperation, as my colleague says.

I remind us of the job situation, and I acknowledge the last three months has seen job growth. The fact is, though, that since Mike Harris became Premier, there are more people out of work. Youth unemployment continues to be a huge problem. Today the United Nations released its report on countries around the world and the quality of life, and they had two major concerns about Canada in an overall very positive report on Canada. The two big concerns were child poverty and youth unemployment, and they are right.

I take my hat off to some of the business community who have been putting a lot of energy into this. There's a program called Careers First that's run by the private sector. The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce hosted a conference about two weeks ago on youth unemployment and helped to launch a new program on it. I applaud that, but that alone will not do it. All of us are going to have to put a lot more energy into this.

Members say, "You're just being unduly negative, as opposition parties are." Don't take our word for it. Go back to the Dominion Bond Rating Service and Standard and Poor's, two of our most respected credit rating agencies. This is their business. They look at the finances of governments, of corporations, of institutions to rate their debt so that organizations that are lending them money know whether they are creditworthy and what interest rates they should be charging them.

Just look at what both of them said: "You are on a risky strategy of implementing the tax cut before the fiscal house is in order." In both cases they said: "We simply are not going to change the credit rating of this province, because it's too risky." Those are the people whose business it is to do that.

If you want to know why we worry about the tax cut, first and foremost, it is driving expenditure cuts far deeper than they should have been or needed to have been. I just say to the public that you have not yet felt the impact of the expenditure cuts. There's not a hospital in the province that has yet closed, but a third of them will close over the next couple of years.

The tuition fees are going up. I don't know whether anybody else feels it, but my own alma mater, Western, has taken its tuition fees from \$3,000 a year to \$18,000 in the MBA program. This will be an interesting debate.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I know Rosedale loves it, because many people in Rosedale can afford it. It will make it easier for their students to get into those schools. The MBA program is first, the medical program will be next, then law, then pharmacy, dentistry, all of them; let the marketplace determine. That may be Mike Harris's Ontario, it may be Preston Manning's Canada. I understand that. But what has set Ontario and Canada apart is that regardless of where or under what circumstances you were born, the day you were born there was a sense of hope and optimism. It didn't depend on whether your mother and father had money or not. But I tell you, if you want to divide Ontario, continue to do the things you're doing.

An \$18,000-a-year tuition fee is out of the question for an awful lot of young people, completely out of the question.

Mr Hastings: What should it be?

Mr Phillips: What should it be? At \$18,000 a year you are ruling out an awful lot of young people. If you think that's the kind of Ontario you want, it's not my Ontario. That's why when someone said earlier, I think it was the member for Mississauga South, "We have a disagreement on the budget," we sure do. I fundamentally disagree with Mike Harris. He has every right to have his opinion; I just happen to disagree with him. I think he's going to divide this province like we've never seen before.

I go back to the bill. You may think this bill on labour negotiation is a great one, but you might as well ask for war. You are taking away bargaining rights for hundreds of thousands of people. If you want to divide this province and have group against group, individual against individual, you are well on the way.

I disagree with you. You're taking Ontario where I don't want to go, and I happen to think Ontario doesn't want to go there. You got elected, you have the authority to do it, and we have the obligation to point out the dangers of it.

We are into one of the dangers today. We are putting Ontario's fiscal health and stability at risk with this budget, with this bill. That's not just me speaking; that is the bond rating agencies, the credit rating agencies. If we get into an economic downturn, we have a major problem on our hands.

I understand the 30% tax cut. Preston Manning and Reform were planning to run candidates in the last provincial election. The Common Sense Revolution, this document, came out May 4, 1994. I remember it well. Mr Clement was one of the proud architects. I just think the Common Sense Revolution is taking Ontario into a divided province, and do you want to know? I fundamentally disagree with it.

I know why you did it. You kept Preston Manning and Reform from running. In fact they thought it was a Reform platform. You hung Jean Charest out to dry. You made the deal with Preston, so you couldn't possibly support Charest. I feel very badly, because there's no question that Preston Manning's attack on Charest was a divisive, mean, nasty piece of business.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr Phillips: It essentially said, "If you're from Quebec, you're no longer welcome to be Prime Minister of the country." That was a mean, nasty piece of business. But the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, and I understand why, sat on its hands and let him make that accusation. Why? Because back in 1994 Preston Manning said, "Listen, if you don't agree to sit on your hands in the next federal election, we'll be running candidates in Ontario."

As I move to conclude my remarks, the member for Mississauga South is absolutely right: We have a fundamental disagreement.

1640

Mrs Marland: But I admire you personally.

Mr Phillips: I try my best to keep personalities out of it. I'm not always successful, as many of us aren't, but I try and deal with the issues.

I don't disagree with the fact that you firmly and honestly have a belief in this document, the Common Sense Revolution. I just don't share that. The budget bill implements it, cutting off our fiscal stability, according to Standard and Poor's and the bond rating agencies. By the way, I would just add that the seniors are paying perhaps the biggest price of all.

Social housing is being dumped on to the property taxpayer. I remember this document well because my opposition waved it around, saying, "Under this plan there will be no new user fees" — copayments or anything. One of the first things the government did was to bring in these enormous drug payments. I know it very well because my dear 94-year-old mother-in-law lives with us and she had to lay out her \$100 and then each time pay her user fee. She thought Mike Harris promised no new user fees.

I'm without hesitation telling you all I don't like the Common Sense Revolution and I will resist it. I will point out that what it means right now is more people out of work than when Mike Harris became Premier, a youth unemployment rate at an all-time high and growing, and class sizes in the province now dramatically larger than when Mike Harris became Premier.

In the health care area, we're looking at closing roughly a third of the hospitals. By the way, the doctors said in their agreement, "We need more money because there's a growing population, an aging population." Ontario's population is going up by over 1.2 million people in 10 years, a large percentage of them seniors, but we've decided that this is the time we can close a third of our hospitals.

I proudly say I'm against the Common Sense Revolution. I think the people of Ontario are beginning to realize the price they're paying — in their health care system, in their education system, in their policing. The biggest budget of the municipalities is policing and you've decided to cut \$660 million and add it on to their expenses.

I'm proud to say that we're against Bill 129, with its neat little hostage in there to get it passed. It simply will add to the despair and the divisiveness in Ontario. With that, I'd like to turn it over to my colleague.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt. I think that

over the years he's demonstrated a real understanding of the basic economic factors that governments have to deal with. He has an ability to explain some very complicated economic issues which face the people of Ontario and he's done that with a lot of commitment. Nobody can deny that, whether you disagree with his perspective or not.

He issues a monthly bulletin called Treasury Watch, which I know people all across the province are asking for because it tries to explain the numbers, which are sometimes a lot for ordinary citizens to grapple with. He does try to explain the impact of provincial budgets, provincial expenditures to all Ontarians. I hope he continues to do that and I hope he continues to give his side of the story, because it's not easy in opposition to get your side of the story out. This is why we need debate in the House: to get the other side out.

In terms of this budget, I guess the thing that is most pivotal is the continual commitment to the tax cut. As you know, this is a tax cut that takes place before the deficit is taken care of. This government is going to continue to borrow money. In fact, in part XI of this bill the members on the other side will be voting to authorize the borrowing of another \$7.5 billion. They're going to borrow this money as they're giving away money for a tax cut which generally goes to the wealthiest people in the province.

As all of us talk to ordinary citizens and taxpayers, over and over again they say, "No, we'd rather have our hospital open, we'd rather have our schools operating with small class sizes, we'd rather not pay user fees than that measly tax cut." Most middle-income, working-class people hardly notice the tax cut when you take into account the user fees. It's something that may be of value to people who make a lot of money, but to ordinary Ontarians the tax cut is not selling.

That's why in this last federal election the two parties that advocated a tax cut got shut out in all the seats in Ontario, except for two. They were selling something that people don't want. The people of Ontario would rather protect the most vulnerable — the seniors, the disabled in our community. They'd rather have investment in affordable housing. They'd rather have investment in good roads than the tax cut.

They've said that very clearly, because they know with the tax cut there's a price to pay. We're paying the price right now, especially in our health care, where the slogan now is, "Don't dare go to a hospital alone. Don't let one of your loved ones go to the hospital alone," because it's like playing Russian roulette. You may get a room, you may get good care, you may get into emergency; you may not. Everyone is worried about the level of care in hospitals.

That's because the tax cut has essentially shown its impact in the front-line delivery of services in our hospitals across this province. That's where it's most evident. No matter how the government tries to skate on it, that is the price of the tax cut. If you look at this budget and how it impacts on that, it means this government is more committed to that reward in a tax cut than it is to maintaining a high level of basic services like health care.

As you know, part of this will be this government's direction to close over 30 hospitals in this province. In Metro alone this government is about to close and sell off 10 hospitals. When those hospital doors close and those emergency departments close, that will be another sign to the people of Ontario that you have a big price to pay for this supply-side economics approach to fiscal management, to this Reaganomics approach, to this Milton Friedman approach to governance.

It has been rejected. Even in the United States they've rejected it. Even the Republicans went down to defeat when Bob Dole ran on the tax cut pledge last time. The Republican agenda was rejected because they ran on the tax cut. Even in Alberta, which has a Conservative government, they did not get into giving a mammoth tax cut before they dealt with the deficit. Alberta has the wisdom at least to not try to burn the candle at both ends, which this government is doing.

They are trying to do too much too fast, and you can see it everywhere. You can see it in the user fees. Here's a government that the other day had to admit it was trying to double-charge seniors \$30 million in extra prescription fees. They have to squeeze that kind of money from seniors to pay for the extravagances of that tax cut, which even the bond rating services — it's not Liberals or New Democrats, it's not the opposition saying it. Moody's is saying it. The Dominion Bond Rating Service is saying, "You can't cut taxes, balance the budget and preserve services at the same time. Something's got to give."

What's giving is the social fabric of this province. The way you judge that is by what's happening to those in our society who are most vulnerable.

1650

Certainly this government judges the quality of life in this province by what is good on Bay Street. If their friends on Bay Street are happy and they're eating and drinking high off the hog, they think everybody else on Main Street in Ontario is happy. That isn't the case.

You've got to talk to ordinary people. You've got to talk to the 55-year-olds who are out of work who go door to door asking for a job. They can't get any employment because they've maybe laid someone else off, business is down, "No room for you in my company."

You have to talk to the 20-year-old, the 25-year-old. Some 20% to 25% of the youth in this province are out of work. These are not young people who don't want to work. These are people who want to work at anything, whether it be in the high-tech field, whether it be in education, whether it be in health care. They cannot find employment. You can't write them off as being the so-called welfare bums. These are our children, these are your relatives, these are your constituents who are knocking on doors, just asking for a chance to be hired. They're not even asking for big wages; they're just asking for something so they can at least help out at home with a little bit of income and a regular job. They can't even get that. They're begging for work in a province where one segment of the population is doing quite well.

But as I said, our seniors are not doing very well when they have to pay for prescription drugs. Our seniors are

not doing very well when their housing accommodation is being threatened by taking away rent control. Our single mothers are not doing very well when they can't get child care, when they can't get housing. Our mothers and our fathers across this province are all dramatically tuned into what's happening in education, where junior kindergarten has basically been wiped out, when we've been told over and over again that if this government really wants to invest in the future of this province, you start with children; you invest in junior kindergarten and child care.

This government is not interested in doing that because their priorities are not there. Their priorities are basically driven by the Milton Friedman approach, supply-side economics, which essentially favours the haves at the top. That's what this budget is all about, and all the measures are about trying to resolve the economic problems of this province on the backs of the most vulnerable.

That's the way you judge whether or not this budget is good: not by what the Bay Street moguls are saying, not by what those bankers are saying, but by what ordinary, taxpaying, law-abiding citizens of this province are saying. The vast majority of them now, who don't have huge bank accounts, don't own huge pieces of property, are saying, "We would rather have good hospitals with an emergency department, and we would rather have our hospitals left open," whether it be in Brockville, Burk's Falls, here in Metro or Port Colborne. People very resolutely are saying: "Keep your stinking tax cut. We would rather have our hospital open." That's the clear message, yet this government is hell-bent on doing whatever it feels is necessary as long as it doesn't get off the mark from its tax cut.

But this government was very clear in getting off the mark on its promises in the Common Sense comic book, where on page 6 it said, "Under this plan, there will be NO" — in capital letters — "new user fees." We're just seeing the beginning of user fees right across this province because of this government. The first who got hit were our seniors. Now every time you go to school the teachers and principals are having to collect user fees for everything from books to day trips; every time parents come to the school, they're hit with indirect user fees because there is no money for after-school programs, for extracurricular programs, for music programs in our schools. Our schools are fighting the result, the consequence of this irrational tax cut. They say, "We've got to keep our commitment," yet they didn't keep their commitment about user fees. They certainly got off that quickly.

The thing about it is, most Ontarians would probably say: "Why don't you delay that tax cut till we get rid of the deficit? Do that afterwards." They would probably forgive the Conservatives — or the Reformers, or whatever they're called now, Reform-a-Tories; I'm not sure what they're going to be called — if they said, "We realize that you want your hospitals, you want good class sizes, you want your roads fixed, you want good services, therefore we'll delay that tax cut till later." No, they're hell-bent on doing this thing — "Right or wrong, we're going to come up with this tax cut" — to prove a point, to whom I don't know. That is what is most troublesome:

Despite the clear message from the voters of this province that they don't want that tax cut at the expense of closing hospitals, they don't want that tax cut at the cost of large classrooms, at the cost of eliminating junior kindergarten, they're still barging ahead no matter what.

That \$200 million they scraped back from seniors on user fees: Why not reduce the tax cut by \$200 million and give it back to seniors who are needy so they won't have to pay the \$100 deductible every year, they won't have to pay the \$6.11 for every prescription? If you asked seniors that, what would they say across this province? "Would you rather have your tax cut that goes to the upper echelons of society or would you rather have your prescription drugs without that user fee?" I think most reasonable seniors would say, "We'd rather have our prescriptions when we need them and not with an extra user fee or charge."

The other aspect of this series of bills in the budget is what's hidden here. The government is offloading, downloading, dumping a lot of the responsibilities of the government traditionally, everything from roads to welfare to social housing, on to the backs of property taxpayers. Property taxpayers across this province in essence indirectly are going to have to pay for this crazy tax cut, because generally speaking in the past the provincial government has provided for social housing support. They're getting away from that and dumping it on property taxpayers.

Property taxpayers all across this province will probably see their property taxes rise, or they may have to make the choice of reducing financial support for social housing, for instance; that's the choice municipalities are going to have to make. The municipalities are going to have to make choices on roads because this government has also dumped over 1,700 kilometres of roads on to municipalities. That means property taxpayers again will have to pay for these roads across this province. This is not a local responsibility. Social housing, welfare and long-term care, all these things that the government has tried to dump — some they've backloaded, offloaded back and forth — are not the responsibility of a property taxpayer, because a property taxpayer knows that property taxes are regressive in nature. At least an income tax is based on your ability to pay.

This is going to be the hallmark of this government, that they have essentially dumped traditional provincial responsibilities on to those who can least afford to pay, whether it be in user fees for seniors or whether it be on municipalities. Those municipalities all across this province will be offloading what the province has offloaded on to them on to their property taxes. Therefore, who's going to get hurt again? It won't be the property taxpayers who have huge homes and huge incomes. That moderate taxpayer with that modest home is going to be hit with property tax increases because of the downloading, so that this government can somehow say, "We balanced our books at the provincial level so we can get that tax cut through at the same time."

I know in Metro alone it's in the range of \$500 million that they've dumped on to the property taxpayers. We don't really know what the exact number is because the ministry still has not even given the figures yet. They're

still squabbling about who is to download and dump on whom so, for sure, we're going to see more user fees and higher property taxes.

1700

One of the indirect fallouts of Bill 129 is that the person who is least able to afford these increases will be paying more, whether they take their children to the swimming pool, whether they have to go to extracurricular classes, whether they pay for prescription fees — essentially in the quality of life.

If you look at people on social assistance, the first thing they did to try to give that tax cut was to cut social assistance unilaterally by 22%. Sure, there may have been some people on social assistance who weren't eligible or whatever, there was maybe some element of fraud that they always talk about, but the vast majority of people on social assistance — 25% or 40%, I'm not sure of the exact number, are children, by the way. So that 22% cut came to social assistance and most of those cuts went to children and people who, through no fault of their own, couldn't find a job as a result of the recession. On the backs of those poor children and citizens, this government is getting the money for its tax cut, and it continues to borrow money for that tax cut.

In terms of where this budget is going, as I said, it's going to please Bay Street to an extent. Bay Street sees that the stock market is doing well, mutual shares are going through the roof and everybody is speculating on the stock market, so this government thinks everything is rosy in Ontario. But maybe it's about time this government talked to people on Main Street, people who perhaps don't own a company or don't own luxury homes or luxury cars, these ordinary people who can't make ends meet. As I said, these are the 25-year-olds who are out of jobs, these are the 55-year-olds who are out of jobs. As much as they say about all these jobs being created, people keep asking me: "Where are these jobs the government keeps talking about? I'm still unemployed. I would love to have a job. Where are they?" I think this government is not listening to the cries of all the youth who are looking for jobs.

As I mentioned in the House the other day, I had a 77-year-old man come into my office looking for a part-time job because he was trying to help out his daughter whose husband had lost his job. That's what it's come to. It will be just like in some of the states in the United States where you have 80-year-olds working as cash and checkout attendants in a grocery store because they can't afford the medical system. That's what we're getting to with this kind of budgetary approach. We're cutting off the most vulnerable.

I pass the baton over to the member for St Catharines now, who is going to finish off the debate.

Mr Bradley: I want to compliment my colleagues for outlining their concerns about a number of the provisions of this piece of legislation. There are some concerns and there are some supportable parts of the legislation as well. Most bills have that.

The bill is being influenced this afternoon, because as I am speaking, the government has dropped secretly or rather quietly this afternoon that which they tried to hide on Monday, June 2, and that is proposed drastic changes

to the procedures of the Legislative Assembly, changes which I believe will totally eliminate the ability of the opposition to meaningfully deal with legislation.

I understand the zealots will like this. I understand those who are extremists on the government side will think this is very good and it will be efficient to pass a bill of this kind. But I'm telling you, I know there are people in the Conservative caucus, because I've served with them for a number of years, who frankly know better than to allow this to happen.

I know that if you run a small business, there is a way of running a small business, and you are quite entitled to run it that way. I think that's appropriate. A business does operate in a different way than a government, and government sometimes can use business methods in its various ministries. I think that can be applauded. I don't try to impose on businesses out there, for instance, the small businesses that people have, the same rules that we would follow in this House.

But I'm going to tell you, what we're seeing here is a real stroke against democracy; it really is. And do you know why it is? Because the next government won't change it. That's the problem. It will be used forever. You see, subsequent governments don't change those rules. Oh, yes, we'll make our speeches now and I am determined that I am opposed to the kind of changes I see being thrown down on the table now for debate. I'm very much opposed to those. I wish I could say to you that a subsequent government of which I was a part, if that ever happened — that it would be changed. But it doesn't happen. I've watched it too often. It's too easy for a new government. If you give them the tool chest, as I think the Minister of Education was talking about, they use it. What I see here is simply the removal of any influence the opposition can have.

You see, governments are going to get their way. With this bill, for instance, you have 82 members. This bill is going to pass. You've been elected as a government and you have those 82 members. That's the way the system works and I respect that this is going to happen with legislation of this kind. Ultimately, when the vote takes place, it will pass in this House. There are some redeeming parts of this legislation, I must say, the bill that's before the House this afternoon brought forward by the parliamentary assistant. But there is nothing that is more outrageous than watching governments put a gun to the head of the opposition.

I know you are going to say, particularly newer members, as they said to me when I sat in the cabinet and newer members joined, "Isn't it awful the way the opposition wants to throw a monkey wrench into the works, wants to slow this legislation down, wants to use extraordinary tactics to stop the government in its tracks from time to time." Yes, it is. It's very inconvenient for a government. But I'm going to tell you, it's essential for democracy.

With this bill, with any bill that you have — I listen to people out there. Not everybody disagrees with what you're doing. Some people who support me support some of the things you are doing. They say: "You know, we like this measure," or "We like that measure, and we understand you people in opposition don't agree with it.

But what we wish is that the government would move more slowly and that the government would move with more consultation, that it wouldn't make such drastic changes and that it would look at the consequences of its actions."

This just allows the boys in the back room of the government, in the Premier's back rooms, to run the government, and the rest of you will be reduced to applauding. The rest of you will be reduced to being the cheerleaders for the backroom people in the government.

There are a lot of people on the government benches who know who has the most power. It's not even the members of the cabinet. Yes, the cabinet has more power than the average members, but really it's Guy Giorno, it's Tom Long, it's people of that ilk who have the real power. They are the people who drive the revolution, and there are some who applaud it. But there are some moderates over there as well, some people in your government who don't agree with everything you do. You agree with the general thrust, otherwise you wouldn't sit in the government caucus. But you know, you throw this at us and you just throw a monkey wrench into things.

I've been to the House leaders' meeting to discuss this bill this morning and to the House leaders' meeting on Tuesday. The mood was pretty conciliatory. I know the government's never as happy as it might be, but the mood was quite conciliatory. I was talking about how yesterday we offered to bring the Waterloo bill in and pass it, as well as a routine motion that we had. That was at the suggestion of the opposition. The two opposition parties agreed with that. I looked at the legislative schedule. Frankly, I think most of it could have been accomplished.

I compliment the government on one thing: It did not put a very controversial bill, I think it's 136, on the docket, and I think that was good of the government not to do that. That was good of the government, that was smart of the government, but I got the feeling this morning in the House leaders' meeting that you really didn't want the opposition to compromise, that somebody in the Premier's office had made the decision, "We're going to impose these rule changes and the hell with everybody else."

1710

I like the government House leader and the whip. I know both of them. I respect them. I've sat in the House with them. They're good people and they're good people to deal with. Both of them are good people to deal with. I know where the orders come from, and the orders don't come from those two individuals. The ultimate orders come from the Premier's office, and that's the sad part. The unelected people, the advisers to the Premier, are running this place with this kind of motion.

It's awful when you go into negotiations realizing that no matter what you offer, the other side really doesn't want you to compromise. What they want you to do is dig your heels in so they have an excuse to shove this through. They didn't even have the intestinal fortitude the other day to have the government House leader make the announcement. They brought in the member for Nepean to make the announcement. If you're going to do it, I wish Mike Harris would actually make the announcement

and say, "This is what I'm going to do." At least then it's on the table who's really behind it and not somebody else.

That's what happens with this bill. With this bill, for instance, the debate extended a longer time than I had anticipated this afternoon, and that was because we had the word — I want to give him credit — from the government House leader, who said to me about an hour ago, "We're going to drop these rule changes down." He was kind enough to do that. As I say, I respect him very much.

But this, I tell you, just turns the mood ugly, when this could have been the end of a session where the mood was I think quite conciliatory. Yes, we'd be disappointed that you're passing some bills, such as this bill, with which we find some considerable fault, but at least it would have been done recognizing that you are the government and you really believe in these things; you believe they're going to help the people of Ontario. I don't think you're doing it to be negative or you're doing it to be mean-spirited. I think a lot of people actually believe that what you're doing is going to work. You know something? In your heart of hearts you always hope it does work, that what the government is doing, despite that fact that in opposition you might oppose it, might help the province of Ontario.

But you do this and you poison the atmosphere. You'll get some editorialists who agree with you, who will say, "It's time this place worked more like a business instead of like a democratic institution." But democratic institutions aren't businesses, just as businesses can't be democratic institutions. They can't be. You can't run your business that way, and I understand that, but nor should you run a democracy this way.

I look at this bill and I ask, if this bill passes, will the world end? No, it won't. Are there some things detrimental? I think so. Are there some things good going to come out of this bill? Yes, there are.

But I see the iron fist coming and heading right at the opposition. It takes goodwill for this place to work. Sometimes that breaks down. Sometimes the opposition is at fault; sometimes the government's at fault; sometimes both sides are at fault when that happens. Nobody can claim to be pure in this at all. This is a political forum — we're discussing the bill politically this afternoon; this is a political forum — but it still has to work with the goodwill of people, with the discussion of people. As soon as you poison the atmosphere, as soon as it gets ugly in here, as soon as the war starts, I don't think anybody really benefits from that.

I want to tell you something. You can win the war on the government side because you have the numbers, because you have the weapons. You will win the war, but it will be a pyrrhic victory if you do, because you will have diminished democracy so much that even some of your supporters out there are going to be concerned when they see this happening. If you're ever in opposition again — we never know; we can't predict these things — I would hate to see another government in power that would restrict your ability to oppose, the way this motion that has been dropped this afternoon is going to restrict that.

As I say, I think it's important that elected people make these decisions, particularly senior members of the caucus and those who have a genuine belief in democracy. Not everybody finds democracy easy. I understand that. I even respect the points of view of people who aren't as democratic as I would like. I really do, because I understand their frustration with the system. They've come from the field of business. They must look at this place and say: "My gosh, it's cumbersome. It's often inconvenient for government, and shouldn't we be moving quickly? We believe in our agenda."

But you bring in this and, I'm telling you, it just poisons the atmosphere. Unanimous consent is something rather interesting in this House. Everybody needs it sometimes. When you ask for unanimous consent and it's not there, problems arise. It's: "Yes, we need unanimous consent. This afternoon you were kind enough to grant us unanimous consent." We have to grant you unanimous consent, because sometimes a government makes a mistake on a motion that could even lose a bill for you. Usually, the opposition, if they're reasonable, will say: "I understand that. Gee, we could get you with this, but we won't because we understand it's important, that it was just a mistake, just a technical or clerical error, and we want you to be able to proceed."

We're not going to engage in a filibuster on this bill, to my knowledge; we're not going to be putting all kinds of amendments through; we're not going to be having a sit-in as a result of this piece of legislation.

But I'm going to tell you, when you get into the fundamental rights of this Parliament, you watch the opposition dig in. It's not a warning; it's just something out there that I know will happen. You know, you can pass any bill. We fight over bills, as we've argued over this bill. My colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt and my colleague from Oakwood both made speeches on the actual contents of this bill. You'll disagree with them. There were some interjections; there was a good jocular exchange, I think. But the bills aren't nearly so important as the tool chest, when you give any government a tool chest so it can ram through its legislation with a minimum of consequences for the government.

The people in the back room want you to be able to move extremely quickly and they want you to move so there are as few scars left on you after the battle as possible. That's the way the public finds out about things, through extended debate or unique or extraordinary action on the part of the opposition which draws attention to something happening in the Legislature. Otherwise, unless you've got a gimmick or you do something with a prop in the House, or — and I say this in a very positive sense — a video always works well, chances are the public's not going to find out about a piece of legislation.

I think many members of the government were secretly happy that the opposition, extraordinary as the action was, did what we did on Bill 26 so that we had hearings right across the province and the government was able to make about 150 amendments to its own legislation. Was it a better bill as a result? Yes, it was. Was it an extraordinary action? Yes. Is it the kind of action you're ever going to take again? Very, very rarely would you ever dare as an opposition to employ that kind of action. But

it helped democracy; I think it changed the government attitude in many ways to many pieces of legislation as a result. It wasn't a proud day for us, but it was an essential move on our part.

I just hope the government will withdraw this motion, because it's going to poison the atmosphere in this place.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the remarks of the three members of the Liberal caucus. The first two members spoke of their disagreement philosophically with the direction this government has chosen in its budget. I will be echoing similar feelings, perhaps for different reasons; in some cases maybe the reasons will overlap. But certainly there will be a fundamental philosophical difference from the direction the government has taken. I want to commend both my Liberal colleagues on their excellent presentations.

I want to spend the remaining bit of time I have in responding to the Liberal members' comments focusing on the issue the member for St Catharines has raised: the rule changes. As he has indicated, there are two affronts that are felt. One is the substance, of course, what you're intending to do, but also the way it's been done. In the previous government, when there were to be rule changes — government members who were here last time will recall that that was the result of quite a number of lakes and rivers and streams being mentioned, a tactic that had never been used before. In fact, a lot of things were done in the last Parliament that had never been done before, which is quite interesting from a historical perspective.

There were negotiations. I haven't seen the document, but as I understand it, one of the clauses contained in the document that's tabled today changes the very protection for the opposition that the then third party House leader, now Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, proposed. It was his protection for the opposition, and now they want to change it. It's interesting that at the end of the day that same member agreed with the changes, although formally voted against it in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time is up.

1720

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): I want to make a few brief comments in response to my colleague the member for St Catharines, who spoke somewhat on the bill that is before us and spent some time speaking about the House rule changes that have been tabled today.

Indeed, there's a great deal of wisdom that my colleague from St Catharines expresses. What we have to bring to bear in this debate is the fact that there have been problems where the House has not been proceeding. Indeed, I certainly can express my personal desire that we always protect the rights of the opposition to be able to express, in a reasonable time frame, in a reasonable way, their objection to bills.

Governments should never lose sight of the fact that in a three-party system, it's very seldom that a party ever gets 50% plus one. I know that's a little catchy phrase at the moment. Indeed, our government received 45% in the last election, which was an extraordinarily high amount of the vote. I believe the Liberals, when they had their

great electoral success, got 47% of the vote. These were all-time highs.

We have to protect the rights of the opposition, but we also have to protect the rights of the government to pass legislation. Some extraordinary events have occurred in this Legislature which have completely stopped the passage of any legislation, in a way that has wasted time; it hasn't contributed to debate. I look forward to the opposition tabling their amendments to this and their suggestions about how to make the House run better.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): It's a pleasure today to respond to the comments made by the members for Scarborough-Agincourt, Oakwood and St Catharines, although the member for St Catharines has been responded to by our very capable whip.

More specifically, Mr Phillips — if I may be so liberal as to use his name — was talking about our budget. I want to give the members and the people who are watching today a bit of background. The intention of our election was to stop spending \$1 million each and every hour in interest. That was where we started. We were well supported across the province, and under the leadership of our Premier, Mike Harris, our plan is working. Ontarians are being able to keep their hard-earned money, the government is learning how to do more with less, yet we're maintaining the highest levels of investments in the priorities that the people of Ontario have been telling us.

Health care is our number one. We've increased the spending from \$17.4 billion to over \$18 billion, and added additional program funding for the transition in the delivery of health care in Ontario. We're investing in health care. We're investing in education. We're also restructuring both those important areas.

Is the plan working? I was just reading in the newspapers the other day that we're creating over 1,000 jobs every day in Ontario. It is obvious that the confidence is returning to this province. Under the leadership of our Premier and our finance minister, our budget surplus this year to the deficit plan was over \$710 million, and we are committed to balancing the budget in the year 2000-01.

Is it working? Ask the housing industry. Is it working? Ask the auto industry. Is it working? Ask the people who have just received a job — 1,000 jobs each and every day in the last couple of months.

I respect Mr Phillips. He's a very knowledgeable finance person. I'm not sure who prepares his briefing notes, but I'm going to read some things from his party's briefing notes.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry. The member's time is up.

Mr O'Toole: I thought I had an hour.

The Acting Speaker: No, this is questions and responses. You know that.

Mr Baird: I compliment my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt on his remarks. He would be pleased to learn, I know, that the Ontario economy — not the provincial government; the Ontario economy — has created 101,000 net new jobs in the last three months. That's very good news for the people of Ontario. In my own community, it's 5,000 new jobs in Nortel, that could grow to as many as 15,000 to 20,000, even 25,000 new jobs, which is good news.

On the issue of the proposals to change the standing orders: Nothing in the proposals would limit the amount of debate in this chamber on a piece of legislation by one minute. What they propose is more opportunities for backbenchers to have the opportunity to participate in debate. Many of my colleagues on this side of the House and some of the others sit and watch some members give 90-minute speeches and then we don't have the opportunity to come here to this place and represent our constituents, and that would allow more democratic debate in this place.

One of the changes would require a vote on the budget. That was something that caused me great concern. I looked and checked the records. In fact, in the last 10 years this place has only voted even on the budget in three of the last 10 years; 70% of the time they didn't vote for the budget under all three parties, and that causes me great concern. This change will enable members of provincial Parliament to hold the government accountable for those decisions.

A majority of the proposals contained in the motion tabled with the order paper are simply employing the practice used in the House of Commons. I come from Ottawa-Carleton. The House of Commons is one of the most democratic institutions in the world. People come from all over the Commonwealth to look at the democratic principles employed in the House of Commons, and that's something a majority of these proposals simply seek to adopt.

What we're seeing is more accountability, a greater role for individual backbenchers and more opportunities for MPPs to speak in this place.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines, you can sum up.

Mr Bradley: We appreciate the comments of the opposition, as we always do. I particularly appreciate the comments of the government whip, whom I have a good deal of respect for and I don't always agree with, but I respect his viewpoint.

I want to point out that I have looked at these rules. Every one of them virtually is there, if you look at them carefully. The people who know the rules of the House know what they're designed to do. They're designed to very much limit the opposition. There may be a few others thrown in. I haven't heard the opposition get up and say, "We demand that you vote on the budget." That's routine. The budget went through. We know you're the government and you pass the budget. We haven't gotten up to demand more budget debate or anything of that nature. I've looked at them and I know, when people write them, what they're up to. They're up to severely limiting the opposition, and that means you, if you're in opposition some day.

It is partisan, because one government is proposing it and the opposition is opposing it. That does make it partisan. But I'm telling you it goes outside of partisan considerations. If you let this happen, it will poison the atmosphere in this place — it will severely — and you will win every time. With those rules, I'm telling you something, you can't lose. You'll win faster and tougher than you've ever won before and it will make some members of your caucus feel very good about doing so.

In the long run you don't win and democracy doesn't win. We can't help you by slowing you down so that you can take a look at what you're doing and maybe correct some mistakes, because sometimes governments make mistakes they want to correct themselves. Unless they are slowed down, unless they're held up, unless sometimes extraordinary action is taken, the government will bulldoze ahead and make mistakes. For the sake of all Ontarians, it's important that we do our best not to make those mistakes.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I would first ask for unanimous consent to allow us to split the leadoff debate with myself and our finance critic, the member for Lake Nipigon.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Christopherson: I thank members of the House for the unanimous consent.

Mrs Marland: Not today, though, right?

Mr Christopherson: No, not today. It will be after today. Margaret, you get to hear me from now until the end of this House, so if you have to go, that's okay, I'll understand. I won't be offended at all, I assure you.

Mrs Marland: And you won't call quorum.

Mr Christopherson: I didn't say that. I didn't say I wouldn't call quorum.

As members know, when we're having a discussion on budget bills, there is the latitude to talk about virtually all a government is doing because at the heart of everything a government does, the budget very much dictates where the government is going. In that light I want to pick up again and just spend a couple of moments on the rule changes, first of all because it's so important, and secondly, because it's also so new.

It's just been a little over half an hour, as I understand, since the government tabled their proposed changes with the officers of the House. As I mentioned in my two-minute response, there are a number of things that we find very offensive, including the process. As early as this Tuesday, apparently the government House leader was advising opposition House leaders that he and they, you, were entertaining ideas and options around what process might be used, which is the way rule changes have always been implemented prior to our government, during our government, and once again we see the traditions, particularly the democratic traditions, of this place being ignored by this government.

1730

When we think about what the government is using as their reason for bringing these in, the fact that the House hasn't always run as efficiently as they might hope, when we saw this House react to Bill 26, there was a positive outcome to what took place here. It wasn't perfect, but we at least forced this very much anti-democratic government to slow down.

First of all, there was the whole idea of that omnibus Bill 26, which was so far-reaching, again unlike anything we've ever seen in the history of Ontario in terms of the amount of raw legislative power you removed from this place and shifted into the confines of the cabinet room, which of course meets in private, whereas this place, for all its faults, is wide open. The seats are here for the public. The cameras are on. The media report. It's a

transparent process. When you brought in Bill 26, you took away so many legitimate powers that belonged here, and you converted what used to require legislative debate and legislative approval into regulatory approval, which again can be done in the cabinet room. That was the first thing you did. Remember? You don't always like to talk about all of your track record.

The second thing you did was try to ram it through in the dying days of this Legislature in the ramp up to Christmas. Yes, the opposition went berserk, absolutely, and I would say no less berserk than members currently in the government would if they were on this side of the House and they saw what was contained in Bill 26, how vast it was, this omnibus bill, the bully bill, and how quickly you were trying to ram it through. We forced you to slow down. We forced you to provide at least some modicum of public hearings, although not nearly enough.

People will recall that the Health Services Restructuring Commission was but one part of Bill 26. That's how big, that's how vast, that's how incredibly imposing that bill was. You would call the use of the House during that time inefficient; we call it fighting for democracy.

I don't think there's a person out there, or certainly they haven't talked to me, who is saying one of the things the Tory government has to do is move quicker: "You're not moving quick enough. You guys are moving too slow. That's why you've got to have the rule changes." Nobody would believe that; in fact, quite the opposite. Even people who have some support for what you're doing are worried and concerned about how quickly you're moving.

You will get your rule changes. You have the majority. At the end of the day, no matter what we do, you will ultimately prevail, but the crime in this is that democracy loses. It's not me personally per se, nor our caucus, nor the combined opposition, but it is democracy that loses. If the rules are what came out of the discussion paper last week — again, it was just tabled and I haven't had a chance to look at the details but I suspect it's fairly close — if that's the case, under those rules you would be able to introduce a bill like Bill 26, or your WCB attack or your new attack on bargaining rights in the public sector, all the things people have a great interest in and deserve to be heard on, and there would be all but nothing we could do about it. You could introduce it on a Monday and make it law by the end of the week. The only thing that could stop you would be public opinion, and in this day and age, with the amount of mass information that people are bombarded by every day, it takes well over a week to get a single message out of this place. So by the time most of the public were aware of what you were planning to do or were in the process of doing, it would be done.

I realize that for the government House leader this sounds like a great idea. But for those who really believe, even as juvenile and as outlandish as it can get in this place, that there is something important that takes place in here, in the public domain, there will be real concern about what you're doing and what you're planning to do with it. Why else would you want it?

We made this argument about Bill 26 when we kept saying, "Look at all the powers you're giving ministers

and taking away from this Legislature." The answer we kept getting was: "Oh, we're not planning to use it. We would never use it. No, no. It's just there."

Of course the reality is that, one by one, you're using every bit of power that you gave yourself in the confines of a cabinet room in Bill 26, and these rules are no different. There are obviously certain pieces of legislation that you don't want to face the wrath of the public on. It's not us in the opposition that you're afraid of, it's the wrath of the public. If you can ram something through and set new land speed records in doing it, you're going to, and you're going to do it with the most controversial legislation. You wouldn't do it with anything that might be perceived as popular. You'd want that to be talked about.

I think it will send a real shiver down the spine of the electorate in this province to think that in your cabinet right now the thinking is you can't move fast enough, because I can tell you, the opposite is true in terms of how people feel. This is very scary. It's very frightening. I don't think there's a great deal of honour and integrity around the process that you've used, and I can only hope that enough people are concerned enough to contact the government members, because at this point that's the only thing that at the end of the day will cause this government to change their mind.

I want to move now to some of the specifics of the bill that's before us, because the government of course is standing up and again screaming from the mountaintop how wonderful and perfect and glorious the 30% tax cut is, the magical 30% tax cut, the thing that's going to save Ontario. I even see a couple of the members nodding their heads up and down. I'm sure that if I had something written down, as you did in the skit last night, you'd all be bowing to it, or as a certain other member of this place likes to say, some of you have drunk the Kool-Aid. For those who have, of course the idea of a tax cut is wonderful.

I suppose if you're making enough money in this province, if you're already making \$250,000, \$300,000 a year, this is great news, this is terrific news. So what if they're cutting the education system? So what if they're cutting the health care system? You've got enough money at that income level to make sure you've got enough private health care to get the best money can offer, so it's not a big problem for you. In terms of education, hey, do what the élites have always done in this province: Send your kids to private school.

1740

Yes, I'm sure there are some people who are just thrilled when every stage of this tax cut is implemented, but for the vast majority of people in this province, the tax cut is a loser. That is beginning to register with people as they see the attack on the health care system. They can't afford the private health care system, which would be the alternative, so they've got to have a decent, efficient, accessible public health care system for their family or they won't have one. The education system is the same thing: Since they can't afford the private system, they need the public system to work.

What hurts is that that's the majority of the people in the province. The majority of people don't make

\$250,000 or \$300,000 a year. They don't make near that. They start to see the looming property tax increases, for those who are fortunate enough to save a down payment, buy a home and build what is usually the largest investment they have in their life: their home. They're looking at the property tax increases. What's so unbelievable is that while they're seeing that property taxes are going to increase, their municipal services are being cut, as a combined result of your transfer cuts to municipalities and your restructuring, which is not working. That will be shown as time goes on.

More and more, average working people and their families, while they obviously bought into your tax cut originally, otherwise you wouldn't have got the votes you did, are now beginning to look at the proof. What's the proof? The proof is what's in your pay every week. "How much of this great 30% tax cut am I getting?" That's the question people ask themselves. It's a legitimate question. It makes political sense. It makes personal sense. That's what people are looking at.

You know what? For most of them so far, zip, zilch, nothing. For a few lucky people it's maybe five or 10 bucks, five or 10 bucks at the cost of that education system and at the cost of the health care system the average middle-class family has to have, because they don't have those alternatives, and all the user fees that are now tumbling into each community from municipalities because they don't have any other alternative. They're saying to themselves: "This is a raw deal. This is not worth it. If somebody's winning big-time out there from this 30% tax cut, it ain't me and it ain't the people I work with, and it's not my neighbours and it's not my relatives. Who is it?"

This government likes to suggest that when we were in government, somehow debt and deficit in no way, shape or form meant anything. I see some of the heads bobbing up and down, the Kool-Aid drinkers once again: "Yup, yup, yup." The fact of the matter is that everyone has a concern about the debt and deficit. I would say directly to all the members, including the member for Mississauga South, who mumbled something that I didn't hear — if you want to heckle, heckle loud so I can respond.

Mrs Marland: What do you mean by the Kool-Aid drinkers?

Mr Christopherson: They'll know. Ask them.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): He means people who don't drink beer.

Mr Christopherson: No. Jeez, get a life, you people. You don't even know what I mean by that.

The fact of the matter is that if you had any credibility on the issue of deficit and debt, the way you claim, like you're the only ones who know about or care about it, then you would not have brought in the 30% tax cut.

That is absolutely no different from a family that sits down at the kitchen table and puts all the bills on the table and says: "Family, we've got a problem. The credit cards are maxed out, we're behind in some of the utilities, the mortgage payment is looming, the car needs to be fixed, and we don't have enough money. We've got to find a way to deal with this." I would suggest to the members of the government that the one thing the income

earners in that family would not say is, "The first thing we want to do in terms of dealing with all these debts we have is that everybody in the family who's working and paid by the hour takes Friday afternoon off." That's what you've done. You've cut the revenue source by \$5.5 billion. That makes a lot of sense.

That's where you lose your credibility. You talk about the debt and deficit as being paramount, to the point that you're prepared to hurt people, hurt injured workers, hurt the poorest of the poor, all under the guise of having to deal with and bow to the holy grail of the debt and deficit, yet you've cut your revenue by \$5.5 billion and you didn't even do it in a way that was fair in terms of everybody getting an equal share of it. It doesn't wash. That's why we're so outraged when you announce cuts, when you announce changes. Part of it is the philosophical difference, because we don't believe you see the same kind of society that most Ontarians have seen and I think continue to see, that as New Democrats we certainly see, in terms of what made us yet again the best country in the world to live, led by Ontario.

You've only been in power two years. All those benefits are from decades of building a society where everyone gets a share, where we don't say those who are the smartest and the fastest and the healthiest can take as much as they can and, "Everybody else, that's just too bad." That's not what made us number one. Americans aren't number one. Although we respect our neighbours to the south, we see a different way to run society.

While I'm talking about some of the differences between us, I would point out to this government that it was Bob Rae and the NDP who first started to make the changes necessary to actually deal with the debt and deficit. We did it a lot differently.

Mrs Johns: Oh, please.

Mr Christopherson: I knew this was going to happen, that I'd get that reaction from some of the members.

Mrs Johns: That is just outrageous.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Huron.

Mr Christopherson: Hear me out. I've still got another 12 minutes and I'm going to spend a bit talking about this. We governed during the deepest recession since the Depression of the 1930s. It wasn't the usual cycle of up and down. It was as bad as it had been since the 1930s. I'll tell you something else. The money we invested in communities kept tens of thousands of people working who otherwise wouldn't have had a job at a time when there were no lifeboats out there.

Something else that was different: In any other recession — and remember, none of them were as deep as the one we were in — historically the federal government had stepped in, particularly the Tories because they were there the longest, and worked with them because they recognized the importance of the economy in Ontario.

What I find most ironic, and can only now really start to laugh about it, is that we found ourselves in the most unenviable position of having our traditional supporters refuse to support us in the 1995 election campaign because they thought we had betrayed them in terms of the cuts we'd made, because we were making cuts and we were changing the way this province operates. They

couldn't believe that an NDP government would do that. We didn't see it that way, but many of our supporters did.

1750

Mrs Marland: No, it was the social contract.

Mr Christopherson: I hear the member for Mississauga South screaming "social contract." Yes, that was a part of it. All of that was part of us recognizing there needs to be attention paid to the debt and deficit. But I'll say this to the member for Mississauga South: We didn't turn our back on the poor. We didn't turn our back on seniors. We didn't cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. We didn't take away 5% of the income of injured workers. We did it differently.

The reality is that at the same time our traditional supporters felt we had turned our back on them because we were addressing the debt and deficit. We said: "This is an issue that has to be addressed. We can't run from it. We've got to do it differently, because as social democrats we have a different view of this province and a different idea of whom the economy ought to serve, but yes, it needs to be addressed."

While that was happening, the current government members in the campaign were very successful at painting the opposite picture, which was that we didn't pay any attention to the debt and deficit. So we found ourselves in the very unenviable position of being squeezed from both sides, with very little manoeuvring room, and ended up with 17 members.

Such is life and we're not bitter, but that is what happened. I like to remind people that there are two different historical views of the perception of the Rae government, and that's crucial to understanding why we feel the way we do about the tax cut that's contained in this bill that's now before us.

The parliamentary assistant, as I mentioned earlier, said in her comments that they're building a better tomorrow for all Ontarians. She mentioned that the government's on track with deficit targets. Well, if we had \$5.5 billion to reinvest right now, because that's how much your tax cut costs, then maybe, if it was invested in the right way, you could make those claims and not face the cynicism and scepticism that you do from a lot of people who are being left out. You know that.

There are some of you over there who have hearts and I've got to believe that some of you have a great deal of difficulty with the people who are being left behind, the people who are paying the freight, especially when so few people are benefiting so much by what you are doing. It's so patently unfair. It may be good politics for you, as you play the Progressive Conservative/Reform game, trying to decide which one you are, but for those Ontarians you're leaving behind, there is no hope. People are scared.

When I talk to seniors in my riding of Hamilton Centre, and I have a lot of seniors who live in the downtown core, they're frightened by what you're doing. That's not us. They're discounting and factoring in the role of an opposition member and the fact that we're politicians, and all of us here are not the most popular people by profession in the world. So it's not a question of fearmongering. It's a question of seniors watching

what's going on, watching the parliamentary channel. Do you know how many seniors are watching the parliamentary channel because they want to know what's going on, because they're frightened? They don't know if the health care system that they know they need will be there for them.

When they hear that someone who makes a quarter of a million dollars is going to get upwards of \$15,000 a year extra take-home because of your 30% tax cut, they go from fear to anger. You can claim that it's working — everybody can play with numbers; everybody knows the expression — but the fact of the matter is that you're way off your target of 725,000 jobs. Everybody is saying so.

As was mentioned earlier, there's no increase in your credit rating; it's exactly where it was when we were there. Yes, you can quote the comments that went along with it, but the fact is it hasn't moved up one iota. Why? Because most economists will say it doesn't make any sense for a government that says debt and deficit is the number one priority to give \$5.5 billion back, and give it to those who already are benefiting most from living in the largest province in the best country in the world for the fourth year running, as decided by the United Nations. It's not fair.

If you took that money, in addition to taking a little longer to do this, we wouldn't have to have huge winners and huge losers, we wouldn't have to see communities that are virtually paralysed because they don't know how they're going to provide the key services they need, because you've cut so much. Oh, you've offered them one hope: You threw Bill 136 at them. Bill 136 is ultimately going to allow this government to ensure that collective agreements are gutted. There's money. Go after those public sector workers. Boy, if ever there's a group of people who are living high on a hog and have got it made, that's the group. So you go after them. They're your target.

You do that. You move from target to target. You started with the poorest of the poor. Every study has shown 3% fraud in welfare. Would that all the income taxes filed by all the high and mighty were only 3%. But for that you ran a campaign, got elected and announced you were going to take 22% of the income away from the poorest of the poor. Then you moved on to the next group. You went after OPSEU, and without one minute of public debate you rammed through a law that took away their rights. You didn't do it to anybody else, just them, because you're really good at labelling people. You do this special interest thing and then you build an environment in the community, in the public's mind, that somehow legitimizes, "If we just go after them — them — everything will be fine, and besides, they deserve to be hit," and then you find some reason.

You moved on to the next group, and it's been injured workers, and it's going to be teachers. Right now it's municipal workers, hospital workers, people who work in our schools. That's your answer to the paralysing situation municipalities find themselves in because of your cuts in transfers. Why did you make such deep cuts in transfers? Because you've got to find the \$5.5 billion for your tax cut, so working people are going to pay again.

You're eliminating so many decent-paying jobs. It's almost as if that phrase were an anathema to you: "decent-paying jobs." It's okay for the top of the House to make as much as they can get, but God forbid an ordinary middle-class working person would go out and receive a decent pay and decent benefits and decent health and safety regulations and have a decent union to represent them. God forbid that should happen, because that's evil. It's got to be evil in your mind, because everything you've done has attacked the standard of living of the average working person, the average middle-class family in this province.

As you continue to move forward with your 30% tax cut, which you will — you've got the power, and now you're going to change the rules and give yourself even more power because you don't think you're moving fast enough — I predict there will be more and more people,

and you'll see it when you're out in the summer. I've said this before, and I think it's true. Every summer when you go back into your ridings and into your communities you've got more and more of your citizens who are scared and outraged at what you're doing. But it's too late for you to do anything about it, so the backbenchers who are never going to get in cabinet have to pray that somehow they can come up with more advertising that finds new people to blame in the next election so you can go through the same process that got you here in the first place.

I assure you there will be New Democrats and people who care about communities who will fight you every step of the way, including your rule changes.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 16 June 1997

Lundi 16 juin 1997



Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 juin 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIOLENCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I rise today to inform members of the Legislature about a very important campaign going on in Thunder Bay. "Raise Values Above Violence" is sponsored by the Catholic Women's League of the diocese of Thunder Bay, which has been studying the effect of violence on youth. This group is carrying on the valuable work started by the Thunder Bay Television Advisory Council's "Speak Out Against Violence" campaign.

The underlying premise of the campaign envisions values and violence as opposite ends of a seesaw: as one goes up, the other falls, hence the campaign slogan, "Raise Values Above Violence."

According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, the reality is that while awareness of violence in the lives of young people has increased greatly in the last decade, many of us still underestimate the problem and its far-reaching effects. We know that violence has serious effects on the short- and long-term health of young people, on their development and on their ability to reach their potential.

By promoting values above violence, we can all come to see that our lives can be lived more safely, happily and with kindness as its own reward.

I want to mention also the campaign's mascot, Kicoo the bear. Kicoo stands for "kindness in caring of others," a moniker we could all stand to remember in our daily lives. I wanted to introduce Kicoo to the members of the House, Speaker, but I recognize that you might have ruled me out of order. But Kicoo is a wonderful mascot.

Finally, I want to commend the Catholic Women's League and Thunder Bay Television for their efforts in addressing the chronic problem of violence for our youth. I invite other communities across the province to join this growing campaign, and I offer to put them in touch with the wonderful people behind the campaign in Thunder Bay.

MARATHON STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): This past Friday the entire administration of the town of Marathon was turned over to its young people. Some 24 positions, each and every one of them pivotal to the efficient operation of the town, were staffed by boys and girls from grades 5 and 6.

Children from Margaret Twomey, Holy Saviour and Val des Bois elementary schools competed in educational projects organized by the school staff. The successful students were placed in management positions. They included mayor of Marathon, OPP detachment commander, fire chief, school principals, mine manager, hospital administrator, ambulance attendant, media correspondent and editor, bank manager, director of education, town chief administrative officer, park warden, town engineer and postmaster.

The Marathon detachment of the OPP, those men and women, coordinated and helped in those efforts, and I wish to take this opportunity to commend them.

All the participants felt that their time at the top, one day today and many in the future, was most rewarding indeed.

I was there and felt most honoured. I had a great time, and they made it that way. I thank you and I wish them well.

KEN ARMSTRONG

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm honoured to rise in the House today to congratulate Ken Armstrong, a great citizen of Peterborough and good friend, on being recently named the Peterborough Volunteer of the Year.

Over 1,000 people, including 392 award recipients, gathered last week at the city's annual civic awards. This event was a time to honour those who have made a commitment to our great community.

A native of Cornwall, Ken moved to Peterborough in 1961 to teach high school at Adam Scott. After retiring from teaching, Ken decided to serve the community in many other ways. He went on to host a local public affairs show on Rogers cable 10, he was pivotal in making the Showplace Peterborough theatre a reality, and more recently he co-chaired the fund-raising group that was instrumental in developing the Evinrude Centre, a state-of-the-art community/sports facility in our city.

This type of volunteer effort is vital to our communities if they are to remain strong and active, and Ken Armstrong has truly demonstrated that commitment to the people of Peterborough.

On behalf of my constituents, my deepest and sincerest congratulations to Ken Armstrong. His tireless efforts have truly made a positive difference in the lives of Peterborough's citizens.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Today the Harris government will try to impose on the Legislature a measure that will make the trains run on time: a motion

that will establish what will amount to a parliamentary dictatorship.

Since taking office in 1995, the Harris regime has never been satisfied with democracy, with having to take the proper time to deal with its radical, revolutionary legislative agenda, or the accountability that comes with assuming the reins of power.

The unelected backroom boys who hold the real power in this right-wing regime are impatient with the pace at which this revolution is being implemented and annoyed at the thought that the opposition could slow down the government in its rush to change Ontario to the liking of the very rich and privileged. They resent the democratic process and they're determined to crush those who would dare to question their wisdom.

The government will try to portray its procedural rule changes as reasonable and sensible, but make no mistake about it: They are designed to squelch all opposition to their drastic changes. Any power the opposition had to moderate the pace of change, to ensure adequate debate and discussion of legislation and motions will be severely reduced or eliminated. We will have in Ontario what will amount to a virtual dictatorship.

The role of this House will become that of a rubber stamp for the Premier's backroom advisers. With severe restrictions on public debate and discussion, the people of the province will not be aware of the consequences of this government's actions.

Most people have asked that the Mike Harris government move more slowly, more cautiously and less drastically. Instead they are determined to make the trains run on time, but at what price?

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): On Saturday afternoon, I joined a gathering organized by a group of citizens of Metropolitan Toronto called the Rocket Riders, who are advocating continued support for public transit in Metropolitan Toronto.

Their concern and mine is a provision of the new draft Municipal Act the government has released, particularly section 10, which says that municipalities can't stop private companies from setting up shop to compete with the TTC. Some people might say, "What's wrong with that?" Competition in their minds might be a good thing. The problem is that when Joe's Private Van Service, for example, runs along Queen Street scooping up passengers, it takes away the revenues the TTC needs to fund transit services that don't make money. The main routes would get chaotic, unregulated service; the suburbs, the less-traffic areas, would get no service at all. That means that tens of thousands of hardworking people would have a very hard time getting to work.

There is a very remote chance that this may simply have been a drafting error. I hope, perhaps against all hope, that's what it is, because the discussion paper talks about sorting out the responsibilities between the provincial and the municipal level in terms of regulating. But as it is written now, this would mean the end of public transportation in Metropolitan Toronto and indeed throughout the province.

I want to call upon this government to rethink its position if it is going in this area, and to correct the mistake if it is simply a drafting error.

MISSISSAUGA INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): It is with pleasure that I stand today to announce a very special event that will be taking place in our great city of Mississauga on July 11, 12 and 13 at the Meadowvale Theatre and West Credit Secondary School and park. Following in a tradition that began last year, the Mississauga International Children's Festival will bring joy to many children between the ages of one and 12. These magical days will be filled with fabulous children's entertainment, including a giant puppet parade, theatre, storytelling and much more.

I am also proud to announce that a portion of the gate receipts at this year's festival will be directed to the paediatric units of the Credit Valley and Mississauga General hospitals. Our appreciation goes to the many volunteers, the many people who have dedicated their time and energy to provide a creative and fun experience for children in Mississauga.

1340

PETERBOROUGH CIVIC HOSPITAL

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I rise today to report to this House about the enormity of the error and the problems created by the Minister of Health in connection with his comments about Peterborough Civic Hospital. We find now in that community that they have united to demand an apology from the minister for the minister having accused Civic Hospital of wheeling bedridden patients out of their room and into hallways to show television cameras that the hospital was underfunded.

For the minister, not even being minister at the time, to have called the Deputy Minister of Health and told her there were a whole pile of empty rooms — the newspaper, the medical staff, people from outside in the community can't find those empty rooms because they're not there. The Peterborough Examiner said it would take the cooperation of the entire hospital, a conspiracy of silence, with the participation of the media, and not just television but the print media who were there for days and weeks before, of the whole community, who have had these real concerns about a hospital that isn't working because of the funding cuts this government has made.

Rather than deal with that, the minister has made people like Dr Allan Thompson, the president of the medical staff at the Civic; Dean MacDonald, the executive director of the hospital; and Lynne Douglas, the emergency room nurse, feel it was their responsibility.

Minister, you must either resign or apologize for those ridiculous and insulting comments. As the newspaper suggests, the minister's lips should be sutured for the kind of insult he is conferring on the people of Ontario and the people of Peterborough.

WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I rise today to put on the record some very serious concerns I have about what is happening in the health care system in our province. I speak as a former Minister of Health; I speak as a member of provincial Parliament representing a number of people who have raised concerns with respect to Wellesley Hospital and Women's College Hospital and Doctors Hospital; and I speak also as a woman, as a user of our health care system.

I feel so much trepidation as I watch this government march down the road of this arm's-length process, handing over to the hospital restructuring commission all these decisions based on numbers, inadequate numbers at that, without looking at the communities served and the special nature of those services.

I want to talk specifically about Women's College Hospital. It is a crime to see that group continuing to bend over backwards to meet the minister's needs, to be flexible, to show that they are going to try and meet all the government's concerns — but to stress to the government that we can no longer have adequate concern and consideration paid to women's health if we do not have separate governance structures to ensure that focus is clear, to ensure that is maintained.

It is not good enough to combine it under the governance structures of Sunnybrook and say: "Trust us. It will continue." As they transfer those services — and you look at the maternal and newborn and other services the government seems to be sanctioning — it makes you think it's nothing more than our reproductive health —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. Member for Wellington.

ONTARIO WORKS

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): The government was elected with a mandate to reform Ontario's social assistance programs. In an effort to help people on social assistance enter the workforce, the county of Wellington has recently completed its Ontario Works business plan.

Just today we received word that the provincial government has approved the plan and implementation is set to begin in July. Under the program, able-bodied people receiving social assistance will be required to accept offers of community placement, training or job placement as an ongoing condition of their eligibility. Groups like the disabled and seniors will be exempt from the requirements but may take advantage of these programs on a voluntary basis.

My constituents in Wellington believe that people who are physically able to work should be working. It is a fact that the vast majority of people on welfare would prefer to work if given the opportunity. However, many people become trapped on the welfare treadmill, and to get off it they need support and positive encouragement so they can believe in themselves again. They need help to gain that first foothold so they can climb the employment ladder to permanent jobs that pay well.

The county's plan on this subject speaks eloquently to these objectives. It states:

"Ontario Works attempts to reform Ontario's social assistance system constructively and has the potential to be a powerful and positive force in the lives of social assistance recipients.... The purpose of this plan is to design a social assistance system which will ultimately reduce the need for assistance by providing individuals and families the resources to become self-sufficient."

In closing, I'd like to extend my very best wishes to Ontario Works participants as they seize this opportunity —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Wellington, thank you.

CHEMICAL SPRAYING AT
ONTARIO LEGISLATURE

Ms Churley: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I believe my principles as a member of this House have been breached, and indeed I believe the safety of the public visiting our Legislature is at issue. I'll take a minute or so to explain.

Like many of us, after a long winter I look forward to the warmer weather. On the rare occasion that time permits, I like to eat my lunch on the lawn or just sit quietly for a few moments. Not until this week did I learn that to do so could be endangering my health.

It's come to my attention that the previous weekend the lawns around the building were sprayed with a substance called Par 3, which is a combination of 2,4-D, dicamba and mecoprop. Some of these chemicals have been taken off the market in other jurisdictions because they have ended up in the drinking water supply.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Riverdale, I'm not demeaning your point of privilege at all, but the point is simply that it isn't a point of privilege here. That is not an issue that is privilege in the Legislature.

I appreciate the fact that you have some concerns with respect to the spraying of the lawns. You expressed those concerns to my office. I did not know that had taken place, and I think we've given you an undertaking that it will not happen again. If you would like to meet on this further, I'll be happy to meet further, but with respect to privilege in this building and a privileged point of order, I don't see it as a point of privilege. It's administration at best.

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, to continue quickly, it's also about the lack of signage. I believe it is a breach of privilege of every member in this House and the visitors who come by, when in my understanding the lawns are under the jurisdiction of the legislative precinct and that decision is made on that level. It came to my attention when I was outside that the lawn had been sprayed over the weekend and the signage had been taken down.

I'm expressing two concerns: (1) I want you to look into why the signage had been removed, and (2) whether all our policies regarding spraying are being taken into consideration.

The Speaker: You know what, member for Riverdale? I'm having a very difficult time finding a head of privilege this would fall under. Having said that, I am not going to demean your point of privilege. If you would like to speak with me at any time after today — I will

give you my undertaking that the chemical spraying won't happen again; I think we've committed to that to you personally — and if you want to pursue this line of questioning at a later date, that's fine. With the greatest of respect, there is no head of privilege I can find for that particular issue.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Is this the same point of privilege?

Ms Lankin: It is with respect to what constitutes a point of privilege.

The Speaker: Okay, I will hear the member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Ms Lankin: Mr Speaker, I'll be very brief, because I think you have indicated a course of resolution to the concern the member for Riverdale has raised and I think she will follow up on that with you.

I just want to point out to you that on other occasions in this House we have raised points of privilege with respect to accessibility of this building, for example; with respect to cleanliness of parts of this building; security of this building; other items of management of the legislative precinct which have been considered to be points of privilege.

I only raise that for your consideration to look at, because I think the member for Riverdale did have a legitimate point of privilege. I think it's been taken care of; we don't need to belabour the point. But I would hope the ruling you just made would not be a precedent in the future which would prohibit us from bringing forward what I think are very legitimate concerns.

The Speaker: I will say to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, access, in my opinion, may always be a point of privilege. Access to this building by members of Parliament is in fact I think a point of privilege.

Cleanliness, spraying of the lawns, if you could cite me examples where I have ruled they are points of privilege, I'd like to see them. What I did at those times and today — I understand your concern; it may not be a point of privilege — I'll deal with that issue as I see it.

As far as the other issues you address, I always think access is a point of privilege; I'm really not sure the others fall under the heading of a point of privilege.

1350

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: On Thursday afternoon, as a member of this House, I felt that my privileges were violated by the language used by the member for Welland-Thorold. In my 12 years in this chamber, I have heard frustration expressed on both sides of the chamber to a degree, but I have never heard, nor has anyone I've spoken to in this chamber, the kind of profanity repeated and repeated by the member for Welland-Thorold as he attacked the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism in this chamber. I ask for your opinion as to whether that is a breach of privilege.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): First of all, it would not be a point of privilege; probably better, it would be a point of order. As a point of order it has been

dealt with. It was dealt with on Thursday, and I see no reason to pursue the matter any further today.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I realize you ruled under 23(k) on the event of Thursday. However, I would like to go back beyond Thursday. Something that has occurred more often and increasingly in this House is the use of profanity, street language. This House is supposed to be a model of decorum. We are supposed to set an example —

The Speaker: Member for Kitchener, with respect, you'll know I just ruled on the point of order offered up by the member for Mississauga South. I want to say there is no timeliness in your standing in your place and outlining your concerns with respect to language. I suggest to the member for Kitchener, if you have concerns about language, the moment that language is used is the time for you to stand up and raise your point of order. This does not become a debating society where we cite examples of months or years ago. If you have concerns, the time to raise them is at that time, and if you raise them at any time after that, it is not a timely point of order and in fact would not be considered to be in order.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today a midwestern parliamentary delegation headed by Representative David Adkins and Senator Bob Cupp. Please join me in welcoming them. Welcome, gentlemen.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, over the past few days, we've heard quite a bit about your high expectations for Ontario students and the additional responsibilities you'll be giving to teachers to ensure that they are ready for this September's new curriculum. But I want to talk for a moment about your role in all this, and in particular the fact that you are failing to recognize that anybody who knows anything about this matter understands that if our students are going to do better, it's important they start at the earliest possible opportunity, and of course that means junior kindergarten.

You have a role here in helping our students to meet the grade. My question for you quite simply is, given that junior kindergarten is an absolute essential today to ensure that students are ready to learn, why don't we have junior kindergarten funded in Ontario today?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): This may be startling news to the Leader of the Opposition. We do.

Mr McGuinty: Perhaps it will come with some shock to the minister to be informed that 25 school boards to date, 30,000 students in Ontario, have been denied junior

kindergarten on his watch because of your cuts to funding.

Minister, I want you to be clear on this. I agree with high standards, but I apply those to you as well. In particular, what are you going to do to help our students make the grade? There are thousands of children in Ontario today who are going to need special help, either because they don't have French or English as a second language or they suffer from particular kinds of learning disabilities. All of those can be addressed at the beginning, which is junior kindergarten.

Minister, are you going to assume your role and reinstate funding for junior kindergarten in Ontario?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Just to make it clear to the Leader of the Opposition, although I think it's clear to about 12 million other people in Ontario, but it needs to be clarified for you, no one is being denied junior kindergarten in this province as an act of this government. It simply is not happening. In fact, this government is funding junior kindergarten programs where boards have decided to offer them at the same rate we're funding senior kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, grade 3. I have made this clear to your education critic in the past. Perhaps you should consult with her and get the facts straight on this.

Second, as far as high standards in this province, as far as having our students be where they should be, which is the head of the class, not behind students in other provinces but right there at the head, we have made some vital steps towards that goal, including the announcements last Friday about a tough standard in curriculum. You could have done that seven years ago, but instead you chose to condemn those students to a substandard level of education. We won't tolerate it. You did.

Mr McGuinty: It's perfectly clear that the minister luxuriates in this language of tough love and tough standards and he applies them to everybody but himself. Let me make it clear what you've done to Ontario students on your watch. So far, 25 school boards have been forced to cut junior kindergarten; 23 boards have been forced to reduce special education programs; seven boards have cut library services. Painful as it may be to realize, Minister, you are going to have to play a role to help our students learn. You cannot continue to throw up obstacles in their way. Otherwise, what you are doing is effectively writing off our students and condemning them to failure.

If you're really serious about our kids succeeding in school, then why won't you as minister assume your responsibility and do the kinds of things that are essential to help them meet with success, starting with junior kindergarten?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Once again, it's becoming embarrassing. The Leader of the Opposition doesn't understand. We fund junior kindergarten currently. We will continue to do so. What perhaps is confusing to the Leader of the Opposition is that we're keeping an election promise and he's not used to that, having been a Liberal most of his life.

Let me tell you this: We have done more to improve education in this province in the last two years than the

two previous governments did in their entire term, including committing the province to funding education so that every student in this province will have an opportunity for a high-quality education, including having curriculum that meets the needs of our students and, finally, having our students being able to outperform students in other provinces — finally and at long last.

The legacy of your government is very clear in Ontario: It's students in the middle of the pack in terms of test results. We won't tolerate that. We're going to have a system that meets our students' needs and we're going to have it very quickly. I and my colleagues are proud of those changes, proud that we've had the courage and the vision to put them in place here in Ontario.

1400

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is for the same minister, the minister who has denied junior kindergarten to 30,000 Ontario students. Minister, I want to talk about 357 students in particular living in the Ottawa-Carleton area who are attending at present the McHugh school offered in eastern Ontario to those students who have very special problems, special learning disabilities, severe emotional, psychological and behavioural problems.

Apparently, there is some fight ongoing between your government and the Ottawa Board of Education about some amount in the range of \$31 million, and I want to set that aside for a moment, because that's not what the parents and the students are concerned about. They want to know whether they're going to be able to attend the McHugh school programs in September of this year. All I need is a yes or no from you, Minister.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): Yes.

Mr McGuinty: Just so the minister is brought up to speed on this, I spoke with the principal of McHugh school this morning. He tells me that his teachers, as of 5 o'clock today, will begin to accept offers to work with other school boards because he cannot offer to them a guarantee that his program will be funded by you. Stand up right now, Minister, and provide us with the assurance that this program is going to be funded, no ifs, ands or buts, and tell us when the funding is going to be delivered.

Hon Mr Snobelen: It obviously confuses the Leader of the Opposition if he can't read his notes verbatim. Perhaps next time I'll wait to say yes until your third question so it won't get you out of sync. The answer is yes.

The Ottawa board, which has been providing these section 27 services to young people in that Ottawa area —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Just a minute, Minister. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for St Catharines, you must withdraw that comment, the dictator comment.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Since I want to speak later on this afternoon, I will withdraw the comment, although I may —

The Speaker: You know full well that “withdraw” is the only word I’m looking for and anything else is extraneous. Minister.

Hon Mr Snobelen: The grace of the member for St Catharines is obvious again today. As you will probably understand if you look into this issue a little bit, you’ll find there was an agreement made under the social contract, by the previous government, with the Ottawa board. The Ottawa board has recently advised us, or at least I’m told they’ve recently advised the ministry, that they may shirk their responsibility to these young people. I can assure you today that the province will not. The province will make sure the programs for those people are funded next September. You have that assurance from me today.

Mr McGuinty: The agreement signed between the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board and the McHugh school was signed by them in early April. That was submitted to you about April 15. To this point in time it has not been signed by you or your representative, and until that is done and a copy is returned to the authorities in education in Ottawa, they have no assurance whatsoever. Parents don’t want to hear about the social contract, parents don’t want to hear about some ongoing fight between you and the Ottawa Board of Education, and 357 students want to know that in September they’ll be able to return to class. When will that agreement be signed and when will it be sent back to Ottawa-Carleton?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I hate to do this to the member for Ottawa Centre, but he said on March 8, 1996, about this change, about the social contract, about the movement of funds to the Ottawa board, “In terms of fairness, if all boards are having to rejig their systems in order to contribute, it seems to me you’ve got to have all board participate.” That’s what he said about this.

The people in Ottawa can be assured of this: We will not allow those children to suffer. We will make sure those programs are offered and we will review the suggestion that was made by the separate school board and the public school board and we will respond to that in the very near future. But the people of Ontario, particularly the people of Ottawa, can rest assured we will provide the funding for those students. They have my assurance and this government’s assurance of that today.

WORKERS’ COMPENSATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Labour. Hearings begin today on Bill 99, your legislation attacking injured workers and the workers’ compensation system. It’s bad enough that literally over 1,000 people will not be heard at these hearings because of the limitations you’ve placed on them. But what’s even worse is you’ve started to implement your privatization scheme for workers’ compensation even before these hearings. Your government contracted with the consultants KPMG and KPMG came

back and gave you a scenario for privatizing some of the WCB services. You started to do that.

Minister, do your government’s privatization guidelines and your guidelines to protect against conflict of interest apply to KPMG in the privatization of WCB services?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): It’s extremely important to remember that whether you call it privatization or contracting out, certainly some of that was begun under your government. As you well know, there are services that are now offered within the vocational rehabilitation program started by yourself where you required the expertise of people outside of WCB. Some of the changes we are continuing to make will again include contracting out of some of the specialized services that are going to be required by the WCB.

Mr Hampton: I asked the minister specifically about KPMG and she struggled hard to avoid answering with respect to KPMG, so let’s go back to it. The WCB gave KPMG a contract to plan the overhaul of the board. KPMG drew up a plan including privatizing large chunks of workers’ compensation operations. Some parts of that have already been implemented.

The reason I asked you the question, Minister, is this: While KPMG was working for the government and setting up a privatization plan for the WCB, it’s now out there saying to people: “Thinking of WCB savings? Think of KPMG.” In other words, they have their insider knowledge of how workers’ compensation is going to be privatized and they’re out there telling employers, “Come and see KPMG if you want the inside track.” Minister, do your guidelines for conflict of interest cover KPMG?

Hon Mrs Witmer: In response to the leader of the third party, we have been advised by the senior management at WCB that there is no conflict of interest that exists at the present time.

Mr Hampton: Once again we see this government’s standards. It’s okay for KPMG to design the privatization of the workers’ compensation operations. Then it’s okay for them to use that insider information and go out there and talk to private sector employers and say: “If you want the inside word on how things are going to happen at the Workers’ Compensation Board, come and talk to us. We’ve got the inside word. The government gave it to us.” This reflects on your government’s standards. Let me ask you this: Will you extend the public hearings so these very important issues can be brought up and the public interest, the taxpayers’ interest can be protected from your privatization schemes?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I’m not sure where the leader of the third party is headed, but I simply want to indicate very strongly that the changes we are making to the Workers’ Compensation Board are such that the interests of the taxpayers will indeed be protected. We want to ensure there are fair and secure benefits for injured workers in the future. We also want to make sure that employers in this province pay assessment rates that are competitive and will continue to encourage people to invest and create new jobs in the province of Ontario. So we are protecting the taxpayers’ money.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mr Hampton: I would say to the Minister of Labour, I don’t see any protection of the public interest. I see

KPMG making a profit here off your privatization scheme.

1410

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): A similar question to the Chair of Management Board: Your privatization agenda I believe reaches right into your own office. Last week we received word that Mac Penney, your executive assistant, is going to work for Government Policy Consultants, a prominent lobby firm. Our interest is this: We want to ensure that people who work in the public sector on Monday, and who are negotiating privatization deals on Monday for the government, don't jump over to the private sector company that they negotiated with on Tuesday or Wednesday, or don't jump over and then start to consult in the private sector on the deal they just worked out in the public sector.

Minister, can you confirm your own executive assistant is leaving to join Government Policy Consultants?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): My employees, government employees, have every right to seek alternative employment. What a particular individual will do surely is not at the dictates of the leader of the third party, as much as the leader of the third party may wish to buttonhole individual employees.

If one of my employees chooses to leave, I can tell you this: The conflict-of-interest principles we have established will be fully employed. The Integrity Commissioner will be asked to investigate and review the matter and ensure there is no conflict if any one of my employees or any of the employees involved with any of the ministers were to leave. Exactly the same procedure would take place to ensure that. The Integrity Commissioner would ensure there is a fair process and one that involves no conflict of interest.

Mr Hampton: I take it you are acknowledging that your executive assistant is leaving now to join the private sector firm. Your executive assistant, Mac Penney, would have had a hand in all of the privatizations you've undertaken. You've privatized water testing labs, cleaning services, mail room services, GO Temp, the government's temporary help agency, and more and you're not finished. The motto seems to be: If it moves, privatize it.

Minister, if you're indeed interested in protecting the public interest, will you make public all the privatization files Mac Penney worked on in your office so taxpayers can judge for themselves what kind of insider knowledge Mr Penney will take with him to his position at GPC? Will you make that information available?

Hon David Johnson: It's interesting that alternative service delivery is not new, yet previous governments — the one the leader of the third party was involved with — did nothing to introduce conflict-of-interest guidelines, were in office for five years, did absolutely nothing. This government on April 23 brought in conflict-of-interest guidelines, and I can assure the leader of the third party that any individual who leaves this government, in the employ of a member of the cabinet, for example, such as myself, will be subject to a review by the Integrity Commissioner.

The Integrity Commissioner will determine that there's no conflict of interest; for example, that the individual is not working on a file for government and then he or she can go to the private sector and work on that same file. As to any firm an individual has had significant dealings with, that individual will not be able to go and work for that private sector firm for at least 12 months.

Mr Hampton: I asked the minister a very clear question. I asked if you would make public the privatization files Mac Penney worked on. A very simple request: Make available to the public the list of privatization files Mac Penney worked on so that members of the public can see for themselves. Members of the public will be able to tell if Mr Penney, when he goes to GPC, is protecting the public interest or is dealing more in enhancing the private interest. That's a simple question. I asked that question and I ask you now: Table the legislation that you promised, that you said would protect the public interest, because I don't think in any of the examples today you've given us one assurance that the public interest is being served. Show us the files; bring us the legislation. Do the right thing.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Don't take Charles's advice. Don't just slough it off that it's the privacy commissioner, that it's in court. That's what Charles does.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order.

Hon David Johnson: If the member for Beaches-Woodbine has had her say, what the leader of the third party is saying is he doesn't trust the Integrity Commissioner to do his job. That's exactly what we've set up. The leader of the third party does not trust the Integrity Commissioner.

In the announcement of April 23 we set up a clear process involving the Integrity Commissioner with principles such as: You can't work on a file in government and work on that same file in the private sector; you cannot move from government to the private sector, to any firm with which you've had significant dealings. The Integrity Commissioner is the guardian of that process. I, for one, trust the Integrity Commissioner. I will ensure that the Integrity Commissioner reviews any individual case from my office, as will all the cabinet ministers, and the public will be protected through that process.

NORTHWESTERN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Gerard Kennedy (York South): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I'd like to ask you about Northwestern General Hospital. As you're aware, Northwestern was one of the hospitals that was in the draft directions from your hospital restructuring commission. It was suggested at that time that the site be closed in 1999. It has already been brought to your attention in this House that Northwestern is being closed in a hurry-up fashion. It'll be shut down by September unless you act. The outpatient clinics are being closed by the end of June; psychiatric beds are being moved out by the end of June; obstetrics are moving July 15, but not gynaecology; and the entire surgical program is supposed to move in

September, which will necessitate the closure of the emergency room.

Minister, you've said earlier that there should be no transfer, you've given no approval for it. It is unknown to the public and unknown to the people in the general area that this is the way we're going to be closing hospitals, and of course it makes a mockery of the hospital restructuring commission because they haven't even given us their final report for Metro.

In the case of Northwestern, you've been aware of the situation. I'd like to ask you today, have you acted on it and have you instructed the board to slow down or to stop this taking down of this hospital in such a hurried-up fashion?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): As I said to the honourable member when he asked this question last, this is not being driven by the Ministry of Health. It is an extremely complicated situation that occurs, of course, during restructurings, when announcements are made. You'll find that Branson, for example, can't get doctors because they're not interested in working there as much as they were in the past because of the interim directives.

What all of us need to see are the final directives from the Health Services Restructuring Commission and then the ministry will be involved. At this point, we're monitoring the situation. That is the best we can do, given that we're in a quasi-legal process and the ministry is not driving this process, the Health Services Restructuring Commission is. We're all waiting for the final directives.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, we're aware when exceptions can be made. We know about that in Burk's Falls; we'll hear about that soon in terms of small rural hospitals. The people served by Northwestern need to know what you're going to do. When you take out gynaecology and you don't take out obstetrics, that means that babies won't be delivered by the doctors who have the children under their care.

There's \$20 million in capital that was supposed to go into Humber Memorial Hospital to take over emergency services. None of that has been approved or spent and yet emergencies are going to be shut down to some level of complete confusion. There are orthopaedic surgeons who say Humber hospital is not prepared to take their cases. The speed at which they're moving is dangerous to patient care.

Minister, you have the power, you gave yourself the power under Bill 26 to give directions to hospitals at any time you see fit. For the integrity of the process you spoke about, but more important, for the safety of the patients currently being served in northwest Toronto, will you act and put a stop to this speeded-up closing down of the Northwestern hospital site? Will you do that today?

Hon Mr Wilson: I have acted — and by the way, those powers weren't contained in Bill 26; they've always been part of the Public Hospitals Act — long before the member raised this issue in the House. It is a daily management issue for the ministry in terms of making sure there aren't gaps in services.

I remind the honourable member that the building doesn't cure anybody. The programs are moving, many

of them intact, to other locations. I tell you that we're doing the very best we can. The board of Northwestern has not in any way abrogated its responsibility, if that's what you're implying. They have a legal responsibility to provide care and that's what they're doing.

1420

WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): My question is also to the Minister of Health. Statements you've made in the Legislature regarding the fate of Women's College Hospital and women's health services contradict what is actually happening. You indicated to me more than once that the commission has directed that all programs delivered by Women's College Hospital be maintained and enhanced, but that is not what the commission has recommended.

The focus for women's health at Sunnybrook will be on maternal newborn services. The clinical and academic setting for a focus on all aspects of women's health will be lost. All this will be lost because Women's College, regardless of the physical location, will lose its governance structure. It is the governance, direction and focus given to women's health by a board that will be lost.

Minister, if you are really serious about all the services provided by Women's College being maintained and enhanced, will you support the retention of a separate governance structure for Women's College at Sunnybrook? Will you do that today?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): The final decision about governance will be made by the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Who are you trying to kid? The chauffeur doesn't decide where to go; the member in the back seat does.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): The member for Algoma.

Hon Mr Wilson: I would remind the honourable member that in the interim report the commission itself calls for the maintenance and enhancement of programs currently being delivered.

I also remind you that this government has put \$10 million into the women's health institute, which is several times more money to be spent on women's health research than is currently spent by Women's College in this province. Their own vice-president of research has applauded the government for doing that and is very much looking forward to the new and exciting things they can do as a program for women's health research to improve the health of women and children in the province.

Ms Churley: You're the same minister who told me that I was breaking the law before for asking you this question. Remember that? The police haven't come to get me yet, but in all seriousness, Women's College Hospital has shown incredible flexibility in determining and trying to figure out a way to meet its needs and the government's needs. All I'm asking you today is to endorse that and let the commission know that you care about women's health beyond our reproductive systems. There's a little bit more to women's health than that.

You stated on April 22 that you supported those objectives, that is, a downtown ambulatory care and sexual assault centre and its own governance. The current proposed direction ignores, for example, the advances Women's College has made in women's cardiac research. We're in danger here of losing everything that we've established over the past 50 years. Will you commit —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Riverdale. Minister of Health, please.

Hon Mr Wilson: Nothing could be further from the truth. The government is ahead of any changes to Women's College Hospital, putting more money into women's health. There are many people today, including the deans of medicine, who have told me in the past, "The best thing you can do for women's health is to incorporate it as part of the day-to-day activities of all hospitals in the province." The people at Women's College know that because the research they do then goes out and is disseminated to all the hospitals in the province.

Ms Churley: You will never be forgotten if you —

The Speaker: Member for Riverdale, come to order.

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, I say the best thing that can be done for women's health, and the advice I get, is that it be the focus of every institution, every physician, and the focus of the entire health care system, not just one hospital located in downtown Toronto. I know the women of Ontario want the focus of health care in Ontario to be on women, on children, on those who have unique needs in our health care system.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There has been a fair amount of activity, one could say a virtual flurry of activity, around municipal restructuring in Ontario. In my own region, of course, there has also been a great deal of activity, so much so that members of the regional council had been lobbying members of this Legislature a fair amount for approval of some of the changes that they requested. The municipalities are anxious to avoid overlap and duplication in the services.

We passed Bill 135 last week in so far as the region of Waterloo is concerned, and I wonder if you could give us a little detail as to exactly what that bill is designed to cover.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to thank the members of the opposition for their support in making sure that bill went through.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Why don't you get rid of these rule changes then?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for St Catharines, come to order, please.

Mr Bradley: Don't even bother thanking the opposition. The thanks we got were dictatorial rule changes; that's the thanks we got for doing that last Wednesday.

Hon Mr Leach: Again I'll thank the members of the opposition, with the exception of the member for St Catharines, if that's what he wants.

I can tell you that on June 11 Bill 135 received second and third reading. I also want to thank the members from Kitchener-Waterloo for all the hard work they put in.

Bill 135 provides for the direct election of the regional chairman, and it also reduces the number of regional councillors from 26 to 22. It's a good example of how municipalities throughout the province are trying to streamline and get rid of waste and duplication.

Mr Wettlaufer: I wonder if you could give us some details about the restructuring plans that other municipalities are doing.

Hon Mr Leach: I would like to inform the House that when this party took office two years ago there were 815 municipalities in Ontario. By the end of 1997 we'll be down to about 650 municipalities, which is a good indication of how the municipalities in Ontario have recognized the need to amalgamate, to restructure, to get rid of waste and duplication and provide more efficient government to the people of Ontario.

There are a couple of examples I could use. In the county of Lambton, the village of Watford and the township of Warwick will amalgamate to form a new township, reducing the number of municipal politicians from 10 to five. That is happening right across the province, including in the area of Kingston and The Islands, where well-known, well-intentioned municipalities have made wise decisions to provide better government.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the acting Premier. On Friday he will know that the widely respected credit rating agency, Moody's, issued its annual report on the financial health of Ontario. The minister will know that under the previous Bob Rae government Moody's downgraded Ontario's credit rating three times. We now find that Moody's is giving Mike Harris exactly the same credit rating as they gave Bob Rae.

In the report, importantly, they are saying that, fully implemented, the tax initiative will cost the government \$5 billion in forgone revenue.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Members for Nepean and Durham Centre, come to order, please. Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

1430

Mr Phillips: The minister will know that Moody's said that, fully implemented, the initiative will cost the government \$5 billion in forgone revenue. They go on to say, "The magnitude of the tax cut increases the risk. Cuts beyond what is currently contemplated will be needed to secure the government's medium-term balanced budget objective."

The question is this: Why is the government ignoring the very strong concern of Moody's about the future credit rating of the province as you proceed with the tax cut?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I think the member opposite is determined to find the black

cloud. I don't have the exact article before me with regard to the credit rating, but my recollection is it was a very favourable response by Moody's and Moody's indicated their extreme happiness with the situation of the province of Ontario.

I will tell you this: The Minister of Finance has been arranging borrowing for the province and the minister was rather amazed that he was able to borrow at 16 basis points over the federal borrowing rate. That's the lowest it has ever been in history. Even when Ontario had an AAA credit rating, the difference was at least 25 basis points. So the reality is that the financial community is saying that Ontario is doing a great job in terms of reducing the deficit and balancing the books.

Mr Phillips: The job of those organizations is to rate the credit. Forget all the rhetoric; the fact is that they have given Mike Harris exactly the same credit rating as they gave Bob Rae. I remember you and Mike Harris saying, "This credit rating is a disaster."

The public should know that we now have had the three major credit rating agencies look at the finances of the province and every single one has given exactly the same credit rating to Ontario as they gave to Bob Rae. Those are the hard facts for the province and the people of Ontario to appreciate: After two years of Mike Harris, exactly the same credit rating.

On Friday Moody's said, "Listen, we have some concerns that there are going to have to be dramatic additional cuts made in expenditures to meet the balanced budget program." My question is very simple: Are Moody's, Standard and Poor's and the Dominion Bond Rating Service wrong or is Mike Harris wrong?

Hon David Johnson: I'll tell you who I think is right out of this whole process: It's those who are creating jobs in Ontario. They are right. They know what's going on. They have confidence in this government. They have confidence in the province of Ontario: over the last three months, over 1,000 jobs a day.

I'll tell you who else is right: Those who loan money to Ontario are right in that they are giving the province the lowest interest rate in years, perhaps ever.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Okay, I understand. The excitement is palpable. New question.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Education and Training. When the minister released the rewritten curriculum last week, dropping the requirement that by the end of grade 3 a student should be able to identify and describe stereotypes in media texts, he seemed to be contradicting a statement he made in this House in March when he said his ministry was planning to release a guidebook for principals and teachers on dealing with organized hate groups.

The guidebook had been sitting for months in the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch of his ministry. Instead of releasing the guidebook himself, the minister disbanded the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch of his ministry. It finally has been published by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers'

Federation in their most recent magazine edition of Education Forum.

Minister, do you honestly believe that we no longer require a branch of your ministry devoted to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity in Ontario schools? Doesn't our society benefit when students —

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Thank you, member for Algoma.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I believe that branch of the ministry had completed the assignment it was given by the previous government and then maintained by this government, which was to work with the school boards as they developed anti-discrimination policies, policies to combat racism; those policies are now in place with every board across the province.

While we have disbanded the branch, no one in that branch lost their job. They are being put out in field services where they are closest to helping out people from the boards and teachers to make sure they combat these sorts of problems. I don't believe we'll ever be done combating discrimination, combatting racism. I believe it remains a priority for this government as it was for your government.

Mr Wildman: The minister says the work is never done, yet he says they completed their task. The minister has received a letter from the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association asking him to ensure a continuing structured effort on fighting discrimination. Metro Toronto council has asked the minister to extend the contracts of the few remaining staff in the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch. These are people who are seconded from school boards until the end of this month.

Will you accept Metro Toronto's request and extend the terms of these secondments past the end of June until you have demonstrated that the work of the anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch will continue in Ontario?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe it's because boards have taken this issue on, again with the help of the ministry, with the support of the previous government, with the support of this government, that we have provided them with the resources they need. I believe the member for Algoma would agree with me that these programs matter in the school, in the classroom. That's where these programs need to take root, that's where we're going to help the most people, that's particularly where we're going to help young people, that's where our concentration of efforts should be; not at 900 Bay but in the classroom, and that's where it will be.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): My question is for the Minister of Education, Mr Snobelen, on curriculum reform. Last Friday you announced a new, higher-standard curriculum for our grade 1 to grade 8 students. I agree we must put our students first.

Parents in my constituency of Durham East have asked for clearer standards, clearer expectations, regular testing and regular reporting for their children. Minister, now that you've released our curriculum on language and math, which is more readable and more understandable for all parents and teachers and students, how will the

new curriculum fit with the other reforms the government has introduced?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to thank the member for the question. It's obviously something of great interest to many people across the province. I want to begin, though, by thanking my caucus committee colleagues who helped us put this curriculum in place, the external advisory bodies that helped us do this and the teachers who were consulted across the province who helped us get good curriculum for grades 1 to 8, we believe the best curriculum in Canada.

It does fit with the package of reforms, certainly the funding reforms to make sure our funds are directed to the classroom, that there are no second-class students in this province by virtue of funding. It fits certainly with the secondary school reform that we are now going through. We've consulted with over 20,000 people across the province, looking for a more relevant secondary school program.

It fits together because it's all driven by the same goal, and that goal is to have the highest student achievement in Canada with our students in Ontario. We believe they deserve no less and we'll be delivering on that goal and on that promise. Thank you.

1440

Mr O'Toole: I'm sure putting the student first is the objective of your ministry.

There have been some who have questioned that this curriculum is being introduced too quickly. Some teachers have complained that they will need more than just the summer to implement the new curriculum in time for September. Minister, are you concerned that we are late in introducing our new curriculum with higher standards?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I can assure the honourable member that in fact we are not. We have had a look at how curriculum was introduced in other jurisdictions, both successfully and not so successfully, and I believe we have the right mix with this introduction. We are phasing in the introduction of changes to grades 1 to 8. We are beginning next fall, two and a half months from now, with the languages and the math curriculum; then we will begin to phase in the other parts of curriculum so the total package will take two years to put in place.

We are sending out that curriculum right now. As a matter of fact it's available on our Web site at the ministry. We're putting out 165,000 copies. We're holding symposiums during the summer months to help people make the transition. We are also having orientation sessions with the boards and other groups to make sure our system is ready for these better standards for our students. Once again, all of this is driven by something I think we have in common with teachers, and that is the goal of having the highest student achievement in Canada with our Ontario students.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMPLOYEES

Mr Peter North (Elgin): My question is to the Solicitor General. I want to again ask you about the circumstances of the employees of Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. Over a week ago I asked you to

consider reinstating these employees. We're talking about a group of people who collectively have over 130 years of faithful service to this ministry. We are talking about a set of circumstances whereby they were asked to deal with a large group of young offenders who had just rioted at another institution, set it on fire and were sent to them in handcuffs and leg-irons, all of this in the middle of a strike.

They're now fired based on an investigation conducted by your ministry. These folks are facing dramatic hardship. Trying to keep their homes, their health and their families has become a difficult challenge as they wait for a legal process, with staggering bills, to prove their innocence now on two fronts, criminally and within the ministry.

Minister, what does it take to convince you that your ministry has left these people twisting in the wind? What can you do for them today?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I very much appreciate the concerns expressed by the member in representing his constituents. As he knows, there was an internal investigation that took some months and it was headed up by an inspector from the Ontario Provincial Police. The report was finalized a number of weeks ago and was reviewed by senior officials within the ministry of corrections, who determined following the review that disciplinary action was called for, and based on that did indeed take action which involved a number of dismissals of managers. Those managers have the right to grieve to the Public Service Grievance Board with respect to the disciplinary action and I understand most, if not all of them are exercising that right.

Mr North: Minister, I'm calling on your sense of fairness with regard to your ministry's employees. I have in my hand documentation that will refute or call into question allegations of disregard for ministry policy and procedures by these employees, senior employees with 130 years of unblemished service to your ministry. I ask you today, will you read this information provided? Given the grave situation these employees are in, I ask you to commit this week to an independent investigation of the circumstances surrounding these employees and their dismissal, and that they be reinstated to suspension with pay until such time as this or some similar fair, agreed upon process is completed.

Hon Mr Runciman: The Public Service Grievance Board, as I understand it, has the right to call witnesses. The member mentioned a lengthy legal process. As I understand it, hearings are scheduled for mid-July to late July to deal with these issues. They have the right to call witnesses, to have counsel represent them with respect to their concerns, and the board itself has the power to reinstate or make modifications to any disciplinary action meted out by the ministry.

Under section 22 of the Public Service Act, the authority to dismiss a civil servant lies within the mandate of the deputy minister or his or her designate, not the minister. I understand the member's frustrations with respect to having his concerns dealt with by the minister, but under the statutory authority, those powers lie with the deputy and his or her designate.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, over this last week, the untimely deaths of two children reminded us once again of the coroner's inquest into the death of Shanay Johnson. That inquest resulted in eight recommendations for action by your government, indeed mostly by your ministry. In the 38 days since this verdict was released, what recommendations have you acted on?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): We're working very closely with the Association of Children's Aid Societies to put in place not only those recommendations but other suggestions and recommendations that have come forward that will help us improve the children's aid, the child welfare system in Ontario.

Mrs Pupatello: In fact, almost every one of those 38 days we have been here in the House, and so far you have done nothing to ensure that deaths like Shanay Johnson's don't happen again. Months ago, the children's aid societies themselves handed you a list of amendments to the law that they need to help them do their job. You have now ensured that those amendments will not happen in this session, which means we can't even look forward to change and help to these agencies by the fall of this year. So far, your actions in this area have been a complete disappointment to everyone who feels that children are a priority to this government. When are you planning to do something that makes a real difference to kids in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Contrary to the suggestion from the member opposite, we don't believe that rushing out and changing the legislation in a knee-jerk reaction is the way to solve a very fundamental and serious problem. If the member is suggesting that we should take recommendations that say we need to give children's aid societies more power and more authority to take children from families without consideration, without proper assessment, she should say that. I think the workers out there deserve more consideration from any government than to rush out and do something for the sake of generating a headline.

The budget was very clear. We have put forward additional resources that will help us implement recommendations at the Ministry of Community and Social Services. We're working with children's aid to come up with the best suggestions and alternatives.

WETLANDS

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. Your ministry is now considering a class A licence application under the Aggregate Resources Act from Seeley and Arnill Aggregates Inc. This particular company proposes a quarry development in Severn township. The local residents who opposed the project before the Ontario Municipal Board argued that before any decision is made, there should be a complete re-evaluation of the wetlands complex. They are very concerned that there has not been an appropriate evaluation of the same and that two wetlands, a class 1 and a class 7, will be destroyed. Are you prepared to

delay issuing of any licence to this company until a complete re-evaluation of the wetlands complex is done?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member of the third party for the question. I am well aware of the details around this issue. We are looking into it. As she knows, an elaborate process takes place any time an aggregate licence is requested; these processes take years. This one has gone through a number of years of study and went through to the OMB hearing, as you heard. We'll be looking into it. I am aware of the issue.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): It has come to my attention that a decision is going to be made any day. If you don't intervene directly now, it will be too late. I believe the residents of Severn township have brought forward a very good case. They don't want to have to go back to the OMB. The residents have already spent thousands of dollars in that process and they don't want to have to go through that again.

1450

I'm sure you're well aware that it's not just the residents. The Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the Sierra Club of Eastern Canada and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters have also made very strong submissions in opposition to this development.

I would ask you, Minister, to commit today to say that you will hold off on this project being given the go-ahead until you have re-evaluated which class it should be categorized in.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned to the other member from the third party, I am aware of the issue. I've been consulted on it. We have a process that I think most people in the province agree is fair. It gives both parties ample access to have input, and it's gone to the OMB. The reason why we have an OMB is to have an impartial arbitrator of these decisions. After that, what happens is they want to make sure that all the issues were considered. I have received correspondence from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and people who are legitimately concerned about protecting wetlands and the values that wetlands contribute to the ecosystems in our province and we will be looking at that.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Mrs Julia Munro (Durham-York): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. When the government scrapped the old Advocacy Act, you promised to implement an approach which was community-based and reflective of the needs of the friends, family and volunteers who are already providing this type of support.

A component of your initiative for vulnerable adults was a telephone inquiry line and a comprehensive clearinghouse of information for those most in need. Can you share with this House how this portion of the initiative is coming along?

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I thank the honourable member for Durham-York. Last year as a part of the

initiative for vulnerable adults, this government announced its commitment to contract a community-based information service to vulnerable adults, including a province-wide telephone inquiry service and a comprehensive clearinghouse of information.

Last week with my honourable colleague the minister responsible for seniors, I was pleased to award a contract to a partnership of organizations led by ARCH, the Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped, with the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at the University of Toronto and the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. The ministry has signed a two-year contract with ARCH and its partners which we anticipate will be launched by the fall.

Mrs Munro: Minister, can you explain to this House how this approach to advocacy differs from the previous government's? And what has been the reaction to our initiative from those who need this service most?

Hon Ms Mushinski: On April 17, 1996, I launched our \$3-million community-based initiative for vulnerable adults. Another component of that plan is the \$2.25-million community connections program which supports the coordination of community-based activities. As most members are aware, this component of our plan is delivered by the Trillium Foundation. I might add that the IVA program is in response to what we heard from many stakeholders, including Mr Reville, who is the former chair of the Advocacy Commission, who agreed we could deliver this program at the community level for approximately \$3 million.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): My question is for the Minister of Education. The unworkable nature of your new amalgamated school boards is becoming all too obvious. One of the concerns that has been expressed over and over again, most recently at the Ontario Public School Boards' Association meeting last Friday, was that there are a great many small communities, particularly in northern Ontario, that will end up with no trustee representation at all. You had assured communities that they would have those concerns addressed. You even announced something called a low-density factor, but the bottom line is that it doesn't work, it doesn't solve the problem.

If I take board number 2 as an example, because these new boards are nameless, they only go by numbers, which serves the central area of northern Ontario, there will be no trustee representation at all for Chapleau, Wawa, White River or Hornepayne. Is it acceptable to you that these communities will have no representation at all on school board number 2?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for Fort William for asking the question today. Obviously, as we make changes in governance and we direct funds to the classroom away from the cost of bureaucracy and the number of people who work in the administration, there are going to be some difficulties in making that. We certainly agree with that. I would like to assure the member for Fort William that I have been talking with a number of people

publicly about this change to see if we can do it in the best way possible to make sure communities are represented.

I've had some meetings with the member for Algoma recently about this very issue and we are looking at one of the alternatives, one of the options, that we can do to make sure those communities are represented properly. I'm sure the member for Fort William will remember that, since the time of the introduction of Bill 104, we have agreed to double the number of boards serving the northern communities on a recommendation from the Education Improvement Commission. Again, we are now looking at how we can improve on that situation, and I assure the member opposite that we want to make sure these changes not only work for the benefit of the communities but work for the benefit of the students. We will do that.

PETITIONS

FIRE SAFETY

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): "Speed, experience and team work save lives. Don't get burned by Bill 84.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Firefighters need speed, experience and teamwork to save lives. I oppose any legislation that could undermine the work of my local firefighters and jeopardize fire safety in my community. Please listen to the professional firefighters and amend Bill 84 to eliminate the threat to fire safety."

I affix my signature to this wonderful petition.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition forwarded to me by the United Steelworkers of America, the Canadian R/PIC Council, from their council meeting in Niagara Falls last month over the name of Reg Duguay, assistant to the director for District 6. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas Elizabeth Witmer returned Ontario's workplace to the Dark Ages by legalizing the use of scabs; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was designed, written and produced for the business community and implemented by their political bond servant Mike Harris with the full support of his totalitarian cabinet; and

"Whereas such government action is designed to break unions, return to picket-line violence in the quest for even more profit, motivated by the corporate gluttons such as S.A. Armstrong; and

"Whereas our Steelworker brothers and sisters at S.A. Armstrong were forced to take strike action while the company employed scabs in an attempt to undermine the collective bargaining process;

"Therefore, be it resolved delegates demand the Harris government immediately amend the Labour Relations Act to provide again for anti-scab legislation."

I add my name to theirs.

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have received over 1,000 signatures from communities like Nanticoke, Cheapside, Springvale and rural areas of my riding on a petition entitled, "Stand Up for Rural Health Care":

"Whereas there is urgent concern about the future of community hospitals located in Dunnville, Hagersville, Simcoe and Tillsonburg; and

"Whereas distance, weather and doctor shortages are serious barriers to people in rural areas accessing emergency services and health care; and

"Whereas local communities have worked for years to establish, maintain, improve and modernize hospital, physician and other health services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt a rural health policy to deal with these problems and to protect the health care rights of rural communities; and that hospital boards, district health councils, the Health Services Restructuring Commission and the government of Ontario adhere to this rural policy."

I agree with this petition and therefore I affix my signature to it.

TFO

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : J'ai une pétition ici adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

«Attendu que TFO répond aux besoins d'Ontariens et d'Ontariennes de tout âge depuis plus de 25 ans offrant une programmation de qualité non commerciale qui continue de consacrer 70 % de son temps d'antenne à l'éducation et aux enfants ;

«Attendu que TFO est accessible à 97,4 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes et que pour certaines communautés qui n'ont pas la télévision par câble, il s'agit de la seule chaîne disponible, ce qui en fait un actif important de la province ;

«Attendu que TFO continue son travail visant à générer plus de revenus ;

«Nous, soussignés, présentons la pétition suivante à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario pour que TFO continue d'être de propriété publique et que ce diffuseur à mission éducative reçoive un financement publique.»

1500

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions signed by and forwarded to me by members of the Toronto and Central Ontario building trades and the UFCW, Locals 175 and 663. The petition reads as follows:

"To save workers' compensation.

"To Premier Harris:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits, excluding claims for back injuries, carpal tunnel, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress and most occupational disease, eliminating pension supplements, handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury, privatizing

WCB to large insurance companies, eliminating worker representation, eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT, deducting Canada pension plan disability benefits and union pensions dollar for dollar from WCB benefits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand compensation if we are injured, a safe workplace, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, that WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Health Services Restructuring Commission has directed the Ministry of Health to close the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the closure of this health care facility seriously jeopardizes the continuity of care for the clients it serves; and

"Whereas this closure will have a devastating economic effect on the communities in Leeds and Grenville; and

"Whereas there has been absolutely no opportunity to allow public input from the various city and town councils, health care providers, district health councils, clients, their families and others who rely upon the services currently offered by the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital;

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents of Leeds and Grenville, urge the government of Ontario to treat us fairly by setting aside the recommendation of the Health Services Restructuring Commission with respect to the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital and the programs and services it provides, for a period of not less than six months, to allow full public input prior to any decisions or directions being issued with respect to the future of the Brockville Psychiatric Hospital, and further request that the Minister of Health direct the Health Services Restructuring Commission to take immediate steps to set up full public hearings in the city of Brockville."

I present that on behalf of the Honourable Bob Runciman. It's signed by more than 1,200 residents, and I affix my signature.

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I am delighted that the member for Lanark-Renfrew is going to sign that petition and I only hope that when the time comes, he will vote for it. But, Mr Speaker, back to my petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Read your petition.

Mr Ruprecht: That's good news. Thank you very much.

The petition is a petition about the current child care crisis in Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Tory government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important and fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled in a training program, or are working single parents, or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers;

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of our Parkdale and High Park communities urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend their plans to implement cuts to our present child care program across our province and restore funding to their previous levels."

I am signing my signature to this document.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CLINICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition regarding occupational health clinics for Ontario workers.

"Whereas the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc (OHCOW) provide high-quality professional medical, hygiene and ergonomic services to employers, workers, joint health and safety committees and their communities; and

"Whereas the professional services that the Ministry of Labour once provided are being offloaded to organizations such as the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, increasing the demand for the services provided by OHCOW; and

"Whereas the professional and technical expertise and advice provided by OHCOW have made a significant contribution to improvements to workplace health and safety as well as the reduction of injuries, illnesses and death caused by work;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call upon the government to maintain the funding of the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers and oppose any attempt to alter the governance structure or erode the professional and technical services of OHCOW;

"Further we, the undersigned, demand that OHCOW be provided with the necessary funds to allow expansion into other Ontario communities in order to provide the professional and technical services needed to reduce occupational injuries, illnesses and deaths."

As I'm in agreement, I add my name to this.

GAMBLING

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas there is much well-documented evidence that the social and economic disadvantages of government-sanctioned gambling far outweigh any apparent benefits;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, declare our opposition to the expansion of casinos and the installation of electronic gambling devices. Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to delay the implementation of Bill 75 and request that the province hold a binding referendum (in conjunction with the 1997 municipal elections) to determine the will of the people regarding the expansion of casinos and the installation of electronic gambling devices in Ontario."

This petition is signed by two members.

TVONTARIO

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): As you know, the campaign to save TVO is going extraordinarily well, with letters and petitions coming in from all across the province, and I have some more to read today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas TVOntario has served Ontarians of all ages for more than 25 years with quality non-commercial television that continues to focus 70% of its programming on education and children's programming; and

"Whereas TVO is available to 97.4% of Ontarians and for some uncabled communities is the only station available, making it a truly provincial asset; and

"Whereas TVO continues to work towards increasing self-generated revenues;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to ensure that TVOntario continue to be a publicly owned and funded educational broadcaster."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions signed and forwarded to me by members of OPSEU and the CAW.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario" — unlike the measly six days we're getting for the WCB.

I add my name to theirs.

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STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have probably one of the most important petitions this House has seen over the last two years right here and I will read it into the record. It states:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris Reform government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Reform government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Reform government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs on all sides will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris Reform government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of all elected members of the Legislative Assembly who" after all "are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office," with unelected people, "in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to abandon these proposed draconian rule changes and retain rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I'm very pleased to add my signature to this as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): I warn you, Mr Speaker, this is long; there are about 44 pages here, although the typing is somewhat large.

I move that the standing orders be amended as follows:
That standing order 1(b) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(b) The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members,

"(i) to submit motions, resolutions and bills for the consideration of the assembly and its committees, and to have them determined by democratic vote;

"(ii) to debate, speak to, and vote on motions, resolutions and bills;

"(iii) to hold the government accountable for its policies; and

"(iv) collectively, to decide matters submitted to the assembly or a committee.

"(c) In all contingencies not provided for in the standing orders the question shall be decided by the Speaker or Chair, and in making the ruling the Speaker or Chair shall base the decision on the democratic rights of members referred to in clause (b). In doing so the Speaker shall have regard to any applicable usages and precedents of the Legislature and parliamentary tradition.

"(d) The standing orders shall not be interpreted or applied in a manner that permits a member to obtain a procedural or tactical advantage by contravening a standing order."

That standing order 6(b) be deleted.

That standing order 9(c) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(c) The House may meet between the hours of 6:30 pm and 9:30 pm on the passage of a government motion for that purpose. Such a motion may apply to one day or to more than one day. The question on such a motion shall be put forthwith and without amendment or debate. Despite standing order 2, such an evening meeting period is a new sessional day. It shall be limited to the consideration of government orders or private members' public business or both, according to the terms of the motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bell shall be limited to 15 minutes. At 9:30 of such an evening meeting period, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

"(c.1) Where a motion under clause (c) provides that all or part of an evening meeting period shall be devoted to the consideration of private members' public business, the motion shall indicate the business to be considered, the time or times reserved for such business, and any special procedure to be followed. Such motion may provide that all or part of standing order 96 applies with necessary modifications to the debate on private members' public business.

"(c.2) The House may sit beyond the hours provided in clauses (a) and (c) on the passage of a government motion for that purpose. Such a motion requires notice, and must appear on the Orders and Notices paper by the first sessional day of the first week to which the motion applies. The question on such a motion shall be put forthwith and without amendment or debate. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bells shall be limited to 15 minutes."

That standing order 10(a) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(a) Whenever the House stands adjourned, if the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at an earlier time, the Speaker shall give notice that the House shall meet at such time, and thereupon the House shall meet to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time and the period referred to in subclauses 6(a)(i) or (ii) had been extended accordingly."

That standing order 11 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(e) If on Thursday morning the House is adjourned for lack of a quorum during the consideration of private members' public business, it shall stand adjourned until 1:30 pm of the same day."

That standing order 13 be amended by adding the following clauses after clause (b):

"(b.1) The Speaker may rule on a point of privilege or point of order when it is raised without allowing any discussion apart from the member raising the point.

"(b.2) A member raising a point of order or point of privilege, and any member permitted by the Speaker to speak to it, must put the point tersely and speak only to the point raised. A point of order or privilege is heard in silence by the House."

That standing orders 15 and 16 be deleted and the following substituted:

"15(a) If a member on being called to order for an offence against any standing order persists in the offence, the Speaker may direct the member to discontinue, and if such member refuses to comply, the Speaker shall name the member to the House.

"(b) When a member is named by the Speaker, if the offence is a minor one, the Speaker may order the member to withdraw for the balance of the sessional day; but if the matter appears to the Speaker to be of a more serious nature, the Speaker shall put the question on the motion being made, no amendment, adjournment or debate being allowed, 'that such member be suspended from the service of the House,' such suspension being for any time stated in the motion not exceeding eight sessional days.

"(c) If any member on being named and directed to withdraw from the House refuses to obey the direction of the Speaker when summoned under the Speaker's order by the Sergeant at Arms, the Speaker shall call to the attention of the House that force is necessary in order to compel obedience and such member shall thereupon, without motion, be suspended from the service of the House for the remainder of the session.

"(d) If a member suspended under clause (c) does not leave the House, the member's presence in the House shall not be recognised and the business of the House shall proceed as if the member had left.

"16(a) In the case of grave disorder in the House, the Speaker or the Chair may, if he or she thinks it necessary to do so and unless it would disadvantage a member who is not responsible for the disorder, adjourn the House or a committee without motion, or suspend any meeting for a time to be named by him or her.

"(b) In order to prevent disadvantage to a member who is not responsible for such grave disorder, the Speaker or Chair may, despite any standing order, adjust any adjournment time, commencement time, voting time or voting schedule, time limit, time requirement or deadline in order to compensate for the time lost by the grave disorder or by the adjournment or suspension referred to in clause (a)."

That standing order 20(a) be deleted and the following substituted:

"20(a) Members shall remain in their places and refrain from interrupting the Speaker when he or she has risen to speak, make a ruling, or put a question to the House."

That standing order 21 be deleted and the following substituted:

"21(a) Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom.

"(b) Once the Speaker finds that a prima facie case of privilege exists it shall be taken into consideration immediately.

"(c) Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give to the Speaker a written statement of the point at least one hour prior to raising the question in the House.

"(d) The Speaker may rule that a prima facie case of privilege does not exist on the basis of the written statement referred to in clause (c) and, despite clause 13(b.1), may do so without allowing discussion from any member."

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That standing order 22(b) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(b) When two or more members rise to speak, the Speaker shall call upon the member who, in the Speaker's opinion, rose first in his or her place."

That standing order 22 be further amended by adding the following clause:

"(d) Subject to the standing orders and any other order of the House, nothing prevents the Speaker or Chair of the committee of the whole House from recognizing an independent member to speak."

That standing orders 24 and 25 be deleted and the following substituted:

"24(a) Except where otherwise expressly provided by the standing orders or by unanimous consent of a committee, no member shall speak in the House or committee for more than 20 minutes.

"(b) Notwithstanding clause (a), the first speaker for any recognized party in the House may speak for not more than 40 minutes in the following circumstances:

"(i) debate on second reading of a government bill.

"(ii) debate on third reading of a government bill.

"(iii) debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

"(iv) debate on the budget motion.

"(v) debate on the interim supply motion.

"(vi) debate on any other substantive government motion.

"(c) Notwithstanding clause (a), no member shall speak for more than 10 minutes after five hours of debate on second or third reading of a government bill.

"25(a) Following the speech of each member, but only during the first five hours of debate, a period not exceeding 10 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the matters before the House and to allow responses thereto, in the following circumstances:

"(i) debate on second reading of a government bill, but no such 10-minute period shall be allowed following the

reply allowed to the minister or parliamentary assistant who has moved second reading of the bill;

"(ii) debate on third reading of a government bill, but no such 10-minute period shall be allowed following the reply allowed to the minister or parliamentary assistant who has moved third reading of the bill;

"(iii) debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, but no such 10-minute period shall be allowed following the speeches of the mover and the seconder of the motion for the address; the speeches of the members speaking first on behalf of the official opposition and the other recognized opposition parties, and the speeches of the members winding up the throne debate for each recognized party;

"(iv) debate on the budget motion, but no such 10-minute period shall be allowed following the presentation of the budget by the Minister of Finance, the speeches of the members speaking first on behalf of the official opposition and the other recognized opposition parties, and the speeches of the members winding up the budget debate for each recognized party; and

"(v) debate on a motion for interim supply.

"(b) In asking a question or making a comment with respect to the matters set out in clause (a), no member shall speak for more than two minutes. Two minutes shall be reserved for the reply of the member originally speaking."

That standing order 28 be deleted and the following substituted:

"28(a) When a voice vote has been taken on any question, a division may be required by five members standing in their places.

"(b) When members have been called in for a division, there shall be no further debate.

"(c) When the members have been called in, the Speaker shall again put the question and, subject to standing order 12, every member present at that time who wishes to vote shall rise and record his or her vote.

"(d) Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote. An abstention shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings or Journals.

"(e) The names of the members voting on each side of the question shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings and the Journals, except on dilatory motions when the numbers only shall be entered.

"(f) Immediately after the vote, the pairs, if any, shall be declared and shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings and the Journals.

"(g) Except as otherwise provided in the standing orders, the division bells shall be limited to 30 minutes.

"(h) During the ringing of division bells as provided in clause (g), the vote may be deferred at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House. The Speaker shall then defer the taking of the vote to the next sessional day during deferred votes, at which time the bells shall be rung for not more than five minutes.

"(i) Divisions requested on motions to adjourn the House or the debate, that the Chair of a committee of the whole House report progress and ask for leave to meet again or leave the chair, and for closure shall not be deferred.

"(j) Notwithstanding standing order 30(b), the Speaker shall put every question on the deferred votes."

That standing order 30 be deleted and the following substituted:

"30(a) The routine proceedings before the orders of the day are as follows:

"Members' Statements

"Reports by Committees

"Introduction of Bills

"Motions

"Statements by the Ministry and Responses

"Deferred Votes

"Oral Questions

"Petitions

"(b) At 4 pm on any day on which the House has not commenced orders of the day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the routine proceeding currently occupying the House and immediately call orders of the day."

That standing order 31 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(d) The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to make a statement for no longer than one and one-half minutes. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties have to make such statements. An independent member shall notify the Speaker of his or her intention to make a statement."

That standing order 33 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(j) The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to place an oral question and one supplementary question during oral question period. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties — other than the leaders of opposition parties or members who place questions instead of the leaders — have to place such questions. An independent member shall notify the Speaker of his or her intention to place a question."

That standing order 34(f) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(f) When the House continues to meet past 6 pm on a government motion as provided in standing order 9, except a motion under clause 9(c), the adjournment proceeding under this standing order shall not apply.

"(f.1) If the House is scheduled to meet again at 6:30 pm of the same calendar day and the debate under this standing order has not been completed by 6:25 pm, the Speaker shall immediately interrupt the adjournment proceeding, deem the motion to adjourn to be carried, and adjourn the House to the next sessional day."

That standing order 35 be deleted and the following substituted:

"35. Under the proceeding 'Motions' the government House leader may move routine motions that are part of the technical procedure of the House, including motions under standing order 9 and other motions for times of meeting and adjournment of the House, and motions for changes in membership of committees and similar non-substantive matters. Except as provided by clause 9(c.2), these routine motions do not require notice."

That standing order 36(h) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(h) Within 45 sessional days of its presentation, excluding sessional days pursuant to clause 9(c), the government shall file a response to a petition with the Clerk of the House and shall provide a copy of the response to the member who presented the petition."

That standing order 37(a) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(a) The report of a standing or select committee on any bill shall be taken into consideration immediately and the Speaker shall put the question on the motion for the adoption of the report forthwith, which question shall be decided without amendment or debate. If a recorded vote is requested, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes."

That standing order 38 be deleted and the following substituted:

"38(a) In recognition of the right of every member to introduce a bill and have it printed for distribution to and consideration by other members, the process for introduction of bills shall be as follows:

"(b) A bill shall be introduced upon a motion for leave for introduction and first reading, specifying the title of the bill. No notice is required.

"(c) Upon being moved, the motion for introduction and first reading shall be deemed to have been carried and the Speaker shall announce the result. In the case of a public bill, the mover may then make a brief explanation of its purposes."

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"(d) On the introduction of a government bill, a compendium of background information shall be delivered to the opposition critics. If it is an amending bill, an up-to-date consolidation of the act or acts to be amended shall be delivered to the opposition critics unless the bill amends an act amended previously in the session.

"(e) No bill may be introduced in blank or imperfect form.

"(f) No introduction of a single bill shall last for more than five minutes.

"(g) The period for 'Introduction of Bills' shall be limited to 30 minutes."

That standing order 39(a) and (b) be deleted.

That standing order 42(g) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(g) Debate on a motion shall be limited to one sessional day. At 5:45 pm on that day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put the question without debate. If a recorded vote is requested, the division bells shall be limited to 15 minutes."

That standing order 43(b) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(b) Debate on a motion under clause (a) shall be at a time allotted by agreement of the House leaders and restricted to one sessional day. At 5:45 pm on that day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put the question without further debate."

That standing order 45 be amended by adding following clause:

"(d) The Speaker or Chair shall rule out of order any motion or amendment that he or she considers to be

frivolous, vexatious, for purposes of delay or contrary to the standing orders or precedents."

That standing order 46(b) and (c) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(b) At 5:45 pm or at 9:15 pm, as the case may be, after the time allocation motion has been called as the first government order of the sessional day the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, division bells shall be limited to 15 minutes.

"(c) A time allocation motion may not be moved until second reading debate has been completed or three sessional days of debate have taken place on second reading consideration of any government bill or on a substantive government motion when that government bill or substantive motion has been called as the first government order of the day on each of the sessional days."

That standing order 54 be amended by deleting the words "or a minister acting in his or her place."

That standing order 55 be deleted and the following substituted:

"55. Before the adjournment of the House on each Thursday during the session, the government House leader may announce the business for the following week."

That standing order 57 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(b) There shall be three sessional days allotted to the debate on the budget motion and any amendments thereto. At 5:45 pm or at 9:15 pm, as the case may be, on the third sessional day of debate, the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the budget motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, division bells shall be limited to 15 minutes."

That standing order 58 be deleted and the following substituted:

"58. All main estimates shall be presented to the House after completion of the budget debate but not later than 12 sessional days following the presentation of the budget and shall be deemed to be referred to the standing committee on estimates."

That standing order 62(c) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(c) There shall be an order for concurrence placed on the Orders and Notices paper for each of the estimates reported from the committee. At 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm, as the case may be, on the sessional day during which debate on the orders for concurrence commences as the first government order of the day, or after three hours of debate on the orders for concurrence if the debate did not commence as the first government order of the day, the Speaker shall without further debate put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries and offices named in the committee's report. No amendment to any question may be moved. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, all divisions shall be stacked, and there shall be a single 15-minute division bell. Debate shall be in the House with the Speaker in the chair and subject to the usual standing orders."

That standing order 65 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(b) When the debate on the interim supply motion is complete, or at 5:45 pm or 9:15 pm, as the case may be, on the sessional day during which debate on the interim supply motion commences as the first government order of the day, whichever is earlier, the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bells shall be limited to 15 minutes."

That standing order 68 be deleted.

That standing order 69(d) be deleted.

That standing order 75 be amended by adding the following clauses:

"(b) The Chair of a committee, including the Chair of committee of the whole, shall rule out of order any amendment that he or she considers to be frivolous, vexatious, for purposes of delay or contrary to the standing orders or precedents.

"(c) The Chair of a committee, including the Chair of committee of the whole, may group the votes on amendments appropriately grouped together, select the order in which amendments are to be voted, dispense with the reading of an amendment provided that the text of the amendment is available to members and members are informed of what amendment is before them, select from among duplicative amendments those which shall be voted and those which shall not, or take such other steps as he or she considers necessary to facilitate the committee's consideration and disposition of multiple amendments.

"(d) The Chair of a committee, including the Chair of committee of the whole may establish deadlines for tabling amendments or for filing them with the committee clerk."

That standing order 77(a) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(a) Bills reported from committee of the whole House shall stand ordered for third reading. Bills reported from standing or select committees shall be ordered for third reading unless the minister or parliamentary assistant directs that it be referred to committee of the whole House."

That standing order 96(b) be amended by adding the following subclause:

"(iv) The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to speak for up to five minutes on the motion of another private member. In exercising his or her discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the opportunities that members of recognized parties have to participate in debate on other members' motions. An independent member shall give the Speaker notice of his or her intention to participate in the debate."

That standing order 96 be further amended by deleting clause (d) and substituting the following:

"(d) The order for consideration of the items of business shall be determined by a ballot conducted by the Clerk prior to or at the commencement of each session. All private members, including independent members, may enter their names for the draw, and names shall be drawn from a single box."

That standing order 96(e) be deleted.

That standing order 97(d) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(d) The minister shall answer such written questions within 45 sessional days, excluding sessional days pursuant to clause 9(c), unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming or that he or she declines to answer, in which case a notation shall be made on the Orders and Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made an interim answer, the approximate date that the information will be available, or that the minister has declined to answer, as the case may be."

That standing order 97 be further amended by adding the following clause:

"(g) No member shall have more than four questions on the order paper at any one time."

That standing order 106(g) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(g) Standing committee on government agencies which is empowered to review and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the operation of all agencies, boards and commissions to which the Lieutenant Government in Council makes some or all of the appointments, and all corporations to which the crown in right of Ontario is a majority shareholder, such reviews to be made with a view to reducing possible redundancy and overlapping, improving the accountability of agencies, rationalizing the functions of the agencies, identifying those agencies or parts of agencies which could be subject to sunset provisions, and revising the mandates and roles of agencies, and to review the intended appointments of persons to agencies, boards and commissions and of directors to corporations in which the crown in right of Ontario is a majority shareholder (excluding reappointments, appointments for a term of one year or less, and appointments of persons who are public servants under the Public Service Act who remain public servants after their appointments) according to the following procedures:

"1. A minister of the crown shall lay on the table a certificate stating that the Lieutenant Governor in Council intends to appoint a person to an agency, board or commission or to the board of directors of a corporation, together with a copy of the position description and a summary of the person's qualifications, which documents shall be deemed to be referred to the committee.

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"2. Upon receipt of a certificate as referred to in paragraph 1, the clerk of the committee shall distribute to each member of the subcommittee on committee business a list of intended appointees in respect of whom a certificate has been received.

"3. The subcommittee shall meet at its own initiative, at the request of the committee, or at the request of any member of the subcommittee, to select from among the intended appointees referred to in paragraph 1, those intended appointees the committee will review. Each member of the subcommittee, other than the Chair, may choose one or more of the intended appointees for review from the certificates provided by the clerk of the committee.

"4. The subcommittee shall report to the committee on the intended appointees for review. Upon receiving the report, the committee shall determine a date for the review of the intended appointees as selected by the members of the subcommittee. The report shall specify the amount of time allocated for the consideration of each intended appointee and the date on which each will be reviewed. An equal amount of time shall be allocated for review of each member's selections, and where a member of the subcommittee has selected more than one intended appointee the time available to review that member's selections shall be allocated among his or her selections.

"5. Upon notice from the clerk of the committee that an intended appointee has been selected for review, the minister shall ensure that the committee receives a copy of the intended appointee's résumé or biographical information and a description of the responsibilities of the position.

"6. A subcommittee member may choose to defer the consideration of one or more of the intended appointees that the member has chosen until a future meeting of the committee at which intended appointees are to be reviewed so long as the consideration of the intended appointee has not previously been deferred.

"7. In reviewing an intended appointee, the committee shall not call as a witness any person other than the intended appointee.

"8. At the conclusion of the meeting held to review an intended appointment, the committee shall determine whether or not it concurs in the intended appointment. Any member may request that the committee defer its determination to the next meeting of the committee, but in any event no later than seven calendar days. In its report, the committee shall state whether or not it concurs in the intended appointments and may state its reasons.

"9. Whether or not the House stands adjourned, the committee shall release its report by depositing it the same day with the Clerk of the assembly and upon receipt of the report by the Clerk the report shall be deemed to be adopted by the House.

"10. A report that the committee will not review an intended appointee shall be deemed to have been made by the committee and adopted by the House in any of the following cases:

"(a) a report respecting the intended appointee has not been made by the committee within 30 calendar days following the day on which the minister tables the certificate referred to in paragraph 1,

"(b) the subcommittee does not at its first meeting following the day on which the minister tables the certificate select the intended appointee for review, or

"(c) the intended appointee has not been selected for review by the subcommittee within 14 days following the day on which the minister tabled the certificate.

"11. The committee by unanimous agreement may extend any of the deadlines in paragraph 10.

"12. The clerk of the committee shall give the minister who tabled the certificate written notification of any decision respecting the appointment made by the committee or the subcommittee on committee business.

"13. During any adjournment of the House that exceeds one week, the committee shall meet on such day

or days as may be determined by the subcommittee, but in any event not more than three times per month."

That standing order 110(a) be deleted and the following substituted:

"(a) Subject to clauses (a.1) and (a.2), no standing or select committee shall consist of more than nine members and the membership of such committees shall be in proportion to the representation of the recognized parties in the House.

"(a.1) An independent member shall be appointed to at least one standing committee. An independent member may state his or her committee preference to the House leaders but such statement of preference is not binding. Unless the House decides otherwise, no standing committee shall include more than one independent member.

"(a.2) The appointment of an independent member to a standing committee shall be in addition to the members of recognized parties referred to in clause (a), and for this purpose the committee may consist of up to 10 members. Further, a recognized party with a majority of seats in the House is entitled to an additional member of the committee to which an independent member is appointed, and in this case the committee may consist of up to 11 members."

That standing order 135 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(b) When two sessional days occur on the same calendar day, a single Orders and Notices paper may be printed for both."

That the standing orders be amended by the addition of the following part:

"XXIV. Other

"144. References in these standing orders to the government House leader shall be deemed also to refer to a minister of the crown, or the deputy government House leader, or the parliamentary assistant to the government House leader, acting in place of the government House leader."

That these amendments to the standing orders, except the amendment to standing order 110, take effect at midnight immediately following the day on which they are adopted.

That the amendment to standing order 110 take effect on the first day after August 1, 1997, that the House meets.

That, except as provided below, once in effect these amendments to the standing orders apply to all House and committee proceedings and to all business before the House and its committees, including proceedings commenced and motions and bills introduced before these amendments took effect.

That clause 97(g) of the standing orders shall not affect questions placed on the Orders and Notices paper prior to June 12, 1997.

That the Clerk of the House be authorized and instructed to print a revised edition of the standing orders of the House, renumbering as may be deemed necessary (including reordering part VIII to reflect the new order of routine proceedings) and making such technical and consequential changes as may be necessary.

That completes the motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Mr Johnson has moved government notice of motion number 24.

Hon David Johnson: I notice there's an hour and a half on the clock. I won't be taking the hour and a half. That's one of the topics that is part of this motion.

It just occurs to me, in reading that great length of pages, that one may get the impression this is all new. In a number of cases there are a number of clauses on a particular topic and there may be a change to one of the clauses. To avoid any confusion, all the clauses in that particular grouping are reworded in the motion, but in fact much of the language is precisely the same as what's in the standing orders as they exist today. So certainly the length is much longer than one would expect by the number of changes that have taken place.

I believe that all the members of this House would agree, at least in their heart of hearts if not vocally, that it is time to review the standing orders and that it is time for some changes.

Not having been here in 1989, I'm informed that the member for Renfrew North led the Liberal government at that time in terms of standing order changes. So the Liberal government felt, as I'm sure governments before it felt, that from time to time standing orders need to be reviewed in light of circumstances, in light of experience, and need to be brought up to date. Changes were made, I think it was in 1989.

The previous government in 1992 did bring in changes —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): After extensive negotiations.

Hon David Johnson: I'm informed by the House leader of the third party, after extensive negotiations. Of course in that regard I express my thanks, and I'm sure we'll all applaud the member for Nepean and his fine work —

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): That's just the cruellest joke of all, that he had anything to do with —

Hon David Johnson: — because the member for Nepean, notwithstanding the comments from my colleagues, has drawn on his experience, having been part of a federal government, being aware of federal rules and procedures. I can tell you that the member for Nepean has taken great wads of paper home over the weekends, the House procedures, read them, gone through them.

1550

Interjection.

Hon David Johnson: If the member opposite is asking, does each and every one of the items that I have tabled today, each and every clause, result totally from the member for Nepean, obviously that's not true, but I can tell you that the member for Nepean did the core work involved here. The lion's share of the work that you see before you today is because of the member for Nepean.

Mr Bradley: Nobody believes it.

Hon David Johnson: If people believe that or don't believe that, there's not much I can do about it, but that happens to be the fact. However, where this was leading me was that he did bring this forward some time ago.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon David Johnson: I think it was about three weeks ago now. I had hoped, as my colleague from the NDP had indicated, that there would be considerable debate and negotiation, and I still hope at this point.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, I would ask you to withdraw, without any question.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): They're a bunch of thugs, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: I just ask you to withdraw the word that you said.

Mr Pouliot: I said many —

The Deputy Speaker: I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Pouliot: I'll withdraw, but I'm not pleased in the least. This is —

The Deputy Speaker: No, I don't want any explanation. I want you to withdraw, clear and simple.

Mr Pouliot: I will. Thank you kindly.

Hon David Johnson: We had hoped to have discussions and negotiations over the last two or three weeks since the member for Nepean had brought forward his suggestions. I do hope that over the next period of time we will have discussions and negotiations. What has been tabled here today — I've said it publicly and I'll say it here again today — is negotiable, and I am interested in the views of all the members of this House.

Certainly the independent member has come forward with a number of suggestions. Most of them are already included in this, and you will see reference to the independent member sprinkled throughout the motion. That was because —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): There's no name attached to it.

Hon David Johnson: Peter North — I'll say his name right here now — came forward with a good number of these recommendations, and I applaud him. I hope each and every member of the House comes forward. I am quite confident that members will come forward and say that there need to be certain things added, there need to be certain things amended and, yes, some things will need to be deleted. I am anxious to hear your comments and I am anxious that we carry on with the negotiation.

My colleague the House leader from the third party has indicated that there were negotiations at the beginning. My understanding is that in 1992 the previous government tabled a motion. There may have been negotiations before that; there certainly were negotiations after that. I understand the House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party at that time, the now Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, was quite vocal in his expressions, and I have every confidence that his views will be quoted as this debate goes on.

From what I have been told, as that process unfolded, Mr Eves, in his capacity as House leader at that time, did deal with the government, and at the end of the day I am told that he supported the motion brought forward. Indeed, the Progressive Conservative Party at that time, at the end of the day, agreed with the standing order procedures brought forward by the NDP government, and while the Liberal Party, I'm told, did not vote for those

procedures, the vote did take place. In my understanding again, at the very least, the official opposition, in that case the Liberal Party, did allow the vote to take place.

There is a form of cooperation among all the parties, two parties agreeing, albeit there would be differences of opinion, and the third party, in that case the official opposition, at least allowing the vote to take place on those standing orders. With that spirit of cooperation in the past in 1992, and that being some five years ago, I am hopeful that the same spirit of cooperation will prevail as we go through this debate.

There are a number of different objectives in terms of the standing orders procedures. People watching the proceedings of this House may say that the number one objective should be, "Restore order." I'm sure every member of this House has talked to constituents who say they cannot believe how the proceedings take place. They cannot believe that there seems to be an uncontrolled, an undisciplined — there's a certain disrepute, I guess, to the proceedings. They're very rambunctious, uncontrolled.

Mr Wildman: The irony is that the tighter you make the rules, the more rambunctious it may be.

Hon David Johnson: That may be, but that's not primarily the reason. There are certainly clauses within the motion which do tend to encourage, let's say, a more efficient running of the House, a more gentlemanly, if I can use that word, running of the House, a running of the House that is not as fractious. Certainly individual circumstances have been raised. I suppose the most recent major circumstance was the filibuster as it pertained to Bill 103.

Here is a case in point: In the federal government there is a capacity to group amendments that are entirely similar. This government at one point in time was faced with thousands of amendments that were similar. In the federal House there is a capacity to group those amendments together so that there can be a vote on the amendments, but at the same time it can be dealt with in a timely fashion. We have attempted to borrow that provision from the federal government.

Indeed, there are quite a number of amendments that are taken from the federal government. The speaking time, for example, in the federal government is 40 minutes for the first speaker, 20 minutes for subsequent speakers, until five hours have elapsed, and then 10 minutes per speaker. We are suggesting that the same rule that applies in the federal government with regard to the number of hours per speaker apply here within the provincial Legislature.

We are suggesting that, as in the federal government, members have the right to abstain. I don't think I've ever abstained from a vote in my life, but some members feel that it is important to have the right to abstain on a vote. In the federal Parliament one is allowed to abstain on a vote, and in a number of other provinces one is allowed to abstain on a vote. Part of this motion today will allow members to abstain.

In the federal Parliament one must give written notice of a point of privilege unless it pertains to something that's occurring in the House at that point in time. That's not something we've had in the past, but again it seems to work well in the federal government, and we're

suggesting through this motion that the same procedure be used here in this Legislature.

They are allowed 45 days to respond to petitions in the federal government. We are suggesting the same thing happen here. In the federal government there is the capacity to get to orders of the day at 4 o'clock. I must say on most days we do get to orders of the day by 4 o'clock, but on some days, if there are various points being raised, that's not achieved. We're suggesting that the same sort of capacity be allowed here in this provincial Legislature as they have in the federal House.

The committee Chair at the federal level has the right to declare certain amendments or motions frivolous or vexatious. Again, we're asking for that same right for the committee Chair.

1600

Order paper questions at the federal level are limited to four order paper questions per member and there are 45 days to respond to them. We're asking simply for the same sort of procedure here in this provincial Legislature as they have in the federal government.

In British Columbia the House is permitted a session from 6:30 to 9:30 in the evening. We are suggesting that same allotment of time in the evening in this provincial Legislature, the same as they have in the British Columbia Legislature, would allow the members of this House to get on with the business, to perform the business of the House. Many members are frustrated at their inability to get to deal with certain pieces of legislation. That would allow that to happen.

In terms of the democratic rights of the individual members, I believe this bill speaks to the rights of the members. For example, the introductory purpose clause refers to the democratic rights of the member. This is a new aspect of the purpose clause that we have introduced to set a tone that the democratic rights of the members are to be respected.

The new time limits on speakers that I have referred to, those same time limits that are in place today in the federal Parliament, will allow more members of this Legislature to participate in the debate. There is a concern that the time is restricted and many members are not allowed or do not have the opportunity to participate in the debate of this House.

The third party may identify with this more, as does the present government, in the sense that quite often it's the government members who are restricted in the vote. In a sense of camaraderie or in a sense of agreement to get a particular piece of legislation through, it's very common that an agreement be reached whereby the government limit its speakers —

Mr Bradley: Then allocate more time.

Hon David Johnson: — to perhaps one speaker or two short speakers and allow the opposition parties to use the rest of the time. This is only a natural situation. I'm sure the NDP will remember this from their days in government back a few years ago. While this assists in terms of dealing with the business at that point in time, it does result in the members of the government being somewhat restricted in their ability to speak.

My colleague from St Catharines says the government should allocate more time, and he's right, if more time

does exist. This government has attempted to allocate more time and to take more time by bringing the House back in January, for example, which is unprecedented. This House met in January and February to allocate more time.

Mr Pouliot: What about August?

Hon David Johnson: My colleague from Nipigon is indicating, "What about August?" Yes indeed, quite likely on August 18 the House will be back, again in unprecedented fashion.

Mr Bradley: No problem.

Hon David Johnson: My colleague from St Catharines says, "No problem"; some other colleagues hold their hand on their heart as if they're having a heart attack, but August 18, in all likelihood. Don't etch that in granite, but that's a possibility. But there, yes, we are in agreement with you, member for St Catharines, that we need to allocate more time.

Through this motion we are trying to allocate more time, not only by using more days in the year but by having the evening sittings, by having the sittings from 6:30 to 9:30, by allowing for —

Mr Bradley: No, that's so you can get more days in; it has nothing to do with more time.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon David Johnson: I understand the differences in points of view, but that will allow more time, not only for government business but for private members' business.

If there's another aspect of this that has bothered me — and it's interesting that there's an article in the paper today about the Alberta Legislature. As I speak, I'm actually being passed the article. It indicates that in Alberta the private members are not only able to introduce pieces of legislation but in actual fact, to a higher degree, that legislation is being debated and passed in some form.

Mr Wildman: You could do it here if you wanted. You are the guys who don't want to.

Hon David Johnson: That's right, we could do it here, but how do we —

Mr Bradley: Then do it.

Hon David Johnson: I hope we do it; I earnestly hope we do it.

Mr Bradley: You don't have to put your government's name on it —

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for St Catharines, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: But to do it, we need more time, and I really think we should do it. That more time, I suggest to you, will be available if the government is able to take advantage in some circumstances of the sittings in the evening from 6:30 to 9:30, or perhaps from just being able to more efficiently extend a day sitting beyond 6 o'clock. That's another aspect of this motion.

Mr Wildman: You could do that, but you're counting it as a separate day.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: I say to the member for Algoma that there are two aspects. One is to have a second sitting in the evening, but also it permits the government to

extend the hours beyond 6 o'clock without going through the rigorous and time-consuming extended motion debate which I think is of little assistance to this House.

I really believe that the members of the House will benefit. I know the opposition parties may not yet share my view on that, but I believe the members of this House will find that there's more debating time for them on the bills that come forward and that there will be more opportunities for private members' bills to reach this floor, to be debated and to be passed.

I've already mentioned the independent members; this is an aspect of this bill. In keeping with the rights of the members — we do have an independent member in the House today; we don't always. I think there was a time during a previous government when we actually had three independent members who weren't associated with any particular party.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, member for Algoma.

Hon David Johnson: This motion will give greater latitude to the Speaker to recognize the independent member, to allow the independent member to participate in question period — although it's interesting, today we did have that — but also to serve on committees. I don't believe the independent member today serves on a committee.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): He can't. It's not allowed.

Hon David Johnson: He can't. It's not allowed, I'm told. I wasn't even fully aware of that. The independent member today cannot serve on —

Mr Bradley: It has nothing to do with independent members; it has everything to do with ingratiating you with the Premier. Never mind independents.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: I'm simply pointing out that —

Mr Pouliot: There are some differences.

Hon David Johnson: Yes, there will be some differences of opinion on this motion. There will be a period of time for debate. There will be a period of time for negotiation. I wish to say that my door is open. I am pleased to have the views —

Mr Bradley: Your gun is loaded and pointed at the head of the opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, come to order.

Hon David Johnson: — of all of the members of the House in this regard.

Mr Wildman: You will reap what you sow.

Hon David Johnson: There are a number of objectives in these motions. The old phrase, "You will reap what you sow" I guess is true of the Liberal changes in 1989, and of the NDP changes.

There were other changes that could have been contemplated. Some people say the question period in Ontario — did you know that the question period in this House is the longest question period anywhere in Canada?

Mr Bradley: So what?

Hon David Johnson: It's great. Isn't that great? There have been comments pointing that out, saying that

perhaps it should be reduced. But no, as a government, we say question period is a focal point and it should continue. In Ottawa, in the federal House, they only have a 45-minute question period. Some legislatures only have 15 minutes as a question period. Can you believe that? Only 15 minutes.

1610

There are a number of aspects. There was a lot of discussion around this. We pride ourselves in Ontario in participation in a democratic process, but the reality is that from time to time there does need to be a review of the procedures. We have brought these procedures forward to enhance the rights of the members. We brought it forward to increase the efficiency of this House.

It's my hope and I suspect in the heart of everyone it's the hope that this Legislature operates in a manner of which we can all be proud, when the people looking in say: "Yes, they have differences of opinion, and yes, they need to express those differences of opinion, but they can do so in an adult way. They can express their point of view, whether it's the government, whether it's the opposition, whether it's the third party." We want a provincial Legislature the people of Ontario can be proud of. I hope through the negotiations over the next period of time we can bring forward a package that will result in that.

Perhaps I will count those few comments as the kickoff to this very important debate, one in which I know a number of members will participate. I'll be anxious to hear their views, hopefully not only their views here in the House. As we discuss this, I honestly hope the members come forward to me and let me know what they would like to see in this package.

Mr Bradley: The House and the people of Ontario should know what this motion is all about. It's all about making the trains run on time in Ontario. It's all about efficiency for the members of the Premier's staff, who are dissatisfied that they are unable to ram through legislation and other matters in this House in a period of time that they consider to be convenient to themselves.

I indicated in the House the other day in a statement and in part of a debate that you best judge governments on what they do when they think nobody is watching them. Members of this House will recall that on election day, with the federal election on, with all of the news media covering the federal election, with virtually no one paying attention to the proceedings of this House, the member for Nepean was put up to going into a press conference, providing what the government House leader's office and the Premier's office wanted in the way of changes to the rules of this House, and called a press conference at 11 o'clock that morning. That is what you call trying to sneak something in. That is the smarriest kind of activity that a government engages in.

Then we find out that last Thursday afternoon, again when proceedings are winding down at this place, just before 5 o'clock the government drops this motion in and calls it for debate today.

The government also will have the power to pass this whenever it sees fit. An ethically sound government is one that when it has the power to implement its agenda,

that is, the raw power of 82 members, doesn't necessarily use that power either to get its way in the House or, in addition to that, to intimidate or threaten the opposition into accepting what the government wants.

For the government House leader to pretend that the member for Nepean had anything to do with this, that this is somehow an independent line of thought from a YPC, goes beyond belief. I think everybody in this House knows that, including many members of the government bench. I don't begrudge the member for Nepean the chance to ingratiate himself with the Premier. He spends his time daily doing so. But at the risk of the democracy which exists in this House, it is totally unacceptable to me, and I'm sure to others.

The government House leader says that previous governments have made changes. One thing members of this Legislature must know is that no future government will change the rules you implement; they won't, because it's convenient to governments. When you make this change, when you implement these changes to procedures, no future government will change those to make it easier for the opposition. That's why it's so important to defeat, to eliminate these changes today, because governments like the convenience.

I've sat on the government side and I've sat on the opposition side. I can recall in my 20 years in this Legislature listening to various arguments put forward on how this House could be made more efficient. It's usually the newly elected members, particularly those who come from the field of business, where things operate differently, and justifiably so, who make the case that the democracy in this Legislature is too cumbersome, it takes too long and it's inefficient. They want to run this Legislature the way they run their business.

I can say to members of this House that there is a way of running a business. I don't think businesses should be run the way this Legislature is run, under the same rules, under the same conditions, because it's a different venue, it's a different circumstance. Yet we have here the government wanting to run this as though someone simply snaps his fingers and legislation is passed.

The full purpose of this change this afternoon is to make it more convenient for the advisers, the unelected whiz kids, the people who have little regard for those of us who are elected, to get their way, and to get their way more quickly. It has nothing to do with anything else and people in this province should know that.

This motion is more important than any piece of legislation that has come before this House. The reason for that is that a bill indeed can be changed. A bill may have ramifications in a specific area. However, when you change the rules of this House, when you change the opportunity for the government to simply ram through its business at its own whim, then you have dealt with a matter of great importance to the people of this province. Everybody, every resident of this province, has a stake in what is happening in this Legislature today.

This government not only wants to ram this through, but if it does not do that, wants to use this motion, with all of the changes included in it, to put a gun to the head of the members of the opposition and say, "You either accept this, either behave yourselves the way we want

you to, or we will implement this tomorrow." This is not good for democracy. This is not good for members of this House. The sad part is that there are members sitting in the government caucus who know that.

There are some members who have been more independent than others. Each has a way of expressing it. I'm not saying one is better than the other. I think of people, and I have disagreed with my colleague the member for Grey-Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch, on a number of occasions on matters of policy, but I'm sure that members such as Mr Murdoch, sure that members such as the man who normally sits in the Speaker's chair during question period, the Honourable Chris Stockwell, the member for Etobicoke West, and I think of Mr Carr, the member for Oakville South, I think of Mr Skarica, the member for Wentworth North —

Mr Pouliot: Ted Arnott.

Mr Bradley: I think of Ted Arnott, the member for Wellington. These are people I know, and there may be others; in fact there might well be others in the government caucus that I don't know about who are very uneasy with these kinds of changes.

What is most disconcerting to those of us in the opposition was, as we approached the last couple of weeks of this Legislature, there were discussions going on which I thought were quite amicable between the House leaders. But I had a feeling last week in sitting down with the government House leader, an individual for whom I have a good deal of respect not only in this House as House leader and as a member but previously as the mayor of East York — I found him a gentleman to deal with, an upfront person and the kind of person who represented the people who elected him well — I sat in those meetings with the feeling that somebody had given the orders that no matter what we said, no matter what transpired in those meetings, the Premier's office had ordered a change to the rules of procedure of this House.
1620

It reminded me of being robbed, if a person were robbed in an armed robbery and somebody came up to you and said, "Give me your wallet," and you said, "Can I give you only the money in the wallet and the credit cards, things that will be of use to you?" and the person saying: "No, I want your kids' pictures as well. I want everything. I want the keepsakes in the wallet."

That's what this was about. We could have said you could have every bill on the docket, every bill sitting there that the government indicated was a priority. If we had said we would agree with that, I am sure this government would have dropped these rule changes.

This is originating in the Office of the Premier. That's where this comes from. That crew is not interested in this House. That crew is not interested in democracy. They don't want the careful analysis of legislation that all of us look forward to in this House. They're not interested in anything that would slow down the implementation of their radical, revolutionary agenda, which is designed largely to benefit the richest, the most powerful and indeed the most privileged people in this province. They don't want that agenda slowed down in any way.

We had a circumstance where I thought we were coming into the last couple of weeks of this portion of

the sitting of the Legislature where the mood was good, where people were trying to be conciliatory; not all the t's were crossed and not all the i's were dotted, but we were trying to be conciliatory. I thought we could have accommodated the government agenda, because they had been wise enough, for instance, not to include Bill 136, a very controversial piece of legislation. I thought we could have accommodated the government agenda and I genuinely believed that. There was a mood of cooperation. When people asked for unanimous consent in this House, they would get unanimous consent.

I can't emphasize how important unanimous consent is, because some day this government is going to make a mistake. It's going to lose a bill and it's going to ask the opposition if they can have unanimous consent to roll the clock back. Usually the opposition, although it has a strategic opportunity to thwart the government's agenda on that occasion, when it recognizes that it was simply a clerical error or an error of procedure, will grant the government that unanimous consent. Well, I'm going to tell you something: You implement this and you've seen the last unanimous consent.

I recognize that affects the opposition as well. I understand the opposition has to ask for unanimous consents. But I will share with my colleagues in the Liberal caucus a viewpoint that we had better have everything lined up, because I am not prepared to ask for unanimous consent from this government; nor, for the next three years of office, if this government decides to stay for three years, will you get unanimous consent if these rule changes are implemented as we see them today, every one of them designed to suit the government's agenda and not the members.

Let's not pretend under some category that this has anything to do with enhancing the role of individual members. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with using the sledgehammer on the opposition and bulldozing legislation and other matters through this House.

In discussion with the government House leader, both the opposition House leaders said we would like a chance to discuss with members of our caucus in some detail the ramifications of these changes. I could quickly spot them. I've been in this House long enough to know when the government's up to something sneaky, and they're up to something sneaky here. They're up to taking away any possibility the opposition has to exert pressure on the government.

There are times, I must say, when the opposition has to use extraordinary parliamentary action. We don't like doing that. There's nobody on this side, I can assure you, who prefers to use extraordinary parliamentary action.

I can think of two occasions within two years where extraordinary action was used. Once was in the case of Bill 26, a massive government bill which attempted to take about 47 statutes of the Ontario Legislature and amend them or get rid of them or make changes to them in such a way that they had rather significant ramifications for the province. Bill 26, members of this Legislature and the public will know, now gives the government the right to close hospitals through the so-called hospital restructuring commission.

The member who had his life saved in St Mary's Hospital and feels an obligation to that hospital now has no opportunity, through this House, to try to protect that hospital from closure when the government-appointed hospital closing commission shows up in that area of the province.

We all remember what the Premier said during the election campaign, in May 1995, in the leaders' debate, in answer to Robert Fisher, one of the news media panelists. Mike Harris said on that occasion, as leader of the Conservative Party, "Certainly I can guarantee you, Robert, it's not my plan to close hospitals." That's a direct quote, and all across this province now we see hospitals closed.

Do we have an opportunity in this House to prevent that from happening? No, we do not, because Bill 26, the massive omnibus — some would say ominous — bill provided for the government to establish a hospital restructuring commission which has a mandate to go around the province and close hospitals, hospitals that many of us believe are essential for our communities and for the patients in those communities.

We took extraordinary action on that occasion. Mr Curling was the member who was specifically affected by this, but it could have been virtually any other member of the Legislature. We wanted to make a point on that occasion, to say to the government: "Hold on. Hold it right there. Take a look at what you're doing. Do you understand the consequences? Do you understand the ramifications of this bill?"

The hospital closing commission was just one provision. There were many provisions of that bill which really gave increased powers to a limited number of people. To whom? To the people who advise the Premier, the unelected people, the whiz kids, as we sometimes like calling them in the opposition, the people who know better than you people who are elected, and to a few cabinet ministers, at the expense of the rest of the members of the Legislature.

All we were asking was that the government not ram this piece of legislation through before Christmas, that it not just have show hearings in Toronto, which were meaningless just before the Christmas holiday season, but instead that the government travel across Ontario and have meaningful hearings in various centres on the provisions of that bill. As a result of that extraordinary action, the government itself made over 150 amendments to that bill. The democratic process worked well in that instance and the government legislation was better as a result of the opportunity the opposition had to invoke an extraordinary procedural and parliamentary measure, to slow the government down, to make the government reconsider. Well, this provision is removed in this particular motion that's before us this afternoon.

On another occasion, against the wishes expressed through plebiscites in various of the municipalities of Metropolitan Toronto, with 76% of the people voting, "No, we don't want one huge megacity," the government decided it would proceed in any event with its legislation. As a result, the opposition invoked an extraordinary measure on that occasion.

Do we like doing it? No. Nobody likes it. I don't think anybody liked that exercise. But it was a demonstration

to the government that you can't simply go around this province during an election campaign talking about listening to the will of the people, and then, when that will is expressed, turn around and ignore it as you did in that instance.

Ultimately, in both cases the government legislation passed. You were elected. You have 82 seats. No, you didn't get 50% of the vote, you got about 46%, but that's the way our system works. I don't want to revisit that. I'm not going to get into the argument, "We should have proportional representation," at all, even though that's an argument for another day. Because our system did work that way, we all knew, going into the campaign, that the party that got the most seats, regardless of the percentage of votes garnered, would be the party that won the election. So I accept that fact. I accept the fact the government has the right to govern. But we in opposition have the right and indeed the obligation to slow the government down, to make the government reconsider, to make the government examine the ramifications of its actions before proceeding.

1630

Even the people who agree with the government — and there are a considerable number in this province who agree with the general thrust of the government, who say, "We believe some of this had to be done" — say to me today, and they're good Conservatives, good supporters of your government: "We wish you in the opposition would at least slow our government down. We wish you would make them do things right, instead of doing them quickly. We wish you would encourage them not to make such drastic changes as they are contemplating and as they're implementing. We wish you would ensure that they examine the consequences and ramifications of their actions before they proceed ultimately to pass the bill in final reading."

That's the role the opposition plays. It's a positive role; it's a constructive role, because it ensures — it doesn't ensure; it reduces the risk that the kind of legislation we ultimately get might be extremely detrimental. That surely is an important part of being a member of this provincial Parliament.

That is why I say every person in Ontario has a stake in this debate. The members of the news media will tell you: "Our editors aren't interested in this. We can't file stories because unless you're going to do something extraordinary, unless there's closure" — by the way, that used to be a matter of great contention; now it's accepted — "unless there's something very extraordinary, a gimmick, a trick happens in this Legislature, we're not interested in procedural matters." Yet this resolution, this motion, has more consequences for the people of this province than anything this government has done so far.

I know Mike Harris may not like this Legislature. I know it may be inconvenient to him. I know the people who advise him may consider it to be —

Mr Wildman: A nuisance.

Mr Bradley: — a nuisance to them, because it's always easier to move more quickly, it's always easier not to get the Cadillac scratched as it's going by, but that surely is the role to play, to let them know what's wrong when things do pass. There are plenty of government

people and government flacks to tell you what is right about what the government is doing. So once that debate takes place and we've gone through all the stages and the government passes its bill, there may still be opposition, but we have to ensure —

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Point of order, Madam Speaker: The member for St Catharines is imputing motive when he says the Premier and other members of the Legislature may not like this Legislature. I think that's a ludicrous thing to say, aside from imputing motive as well, Madam Speaker. I believe that is out of order and I would ask you to rule on it.

Mr Wildman: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Same point of order?

Mr Wildman: Yes. It is difficult to impute motives when in fact you are describing them accurately.

The Acting Speaker: I've been listening carefully to the member for St Catharines and I have not heard specifically imputing motives. As often happens in debates here, people give opinions as to what they think is going on. I will continue to be listening carefully. I'll ask the member for St Catharines to continue.

Mr Bradley: I want to get back to looking at who should be running the province and who should not be running the province. We have seen in many jurisdictions, not in Ontario alone, an unfortunate move towards placing more power in the hands of unelected people. It's because many people consider legislative bodies, parliaments, to be inconvenient, to be cumbersome, to be overly democratic.

This does not bode well for those of us who are individually elected members. Let me tell you why that is the case. That is the case because if the people who elect us don't like us, at the end of our term they can indicate that by not returning us to office. That is why on election day I remember a number of politicians who have said, when they have lost, that the people have spoken and the people are always right in a democracy. What they mean by that is that's how democracy works; the people do make that decision. Individual politicians, individual elected representatives who are defeated may quarrel with that decision but they must respect that decision, as I respect that decision.

That is why I worry when I see that the very people who make the most decisions, those who seem to have the most power, are not elected. You can't get at them. You can't get at the senior civil service, and more important, you can't get at the political advisers to the Premier. Yet, if you talk to individual members of any government, particularly those who are not in cabinet, you will find out that they believe power rests with those unelected advisers, which is most unfortunate. Again, that is not healthy for the democratic system.

The rule changes, then, to those individuals are there to grease the skids for the kinds of radical and revolutionary changes they wish to impose upon Ontario. When you're making changes which are so radical — and I want to characterize the changes that way because they're not moderate changes; they are radical changes. I guess that's democracy and there's nothing wrong as such with radical changes. You have to live with those changes. The point I make, though, is that when you are making

those changes which are so radical, there's an extra onus on those of us in opposition to point out the consequences of those changes. That's why extensive debate is very important in those cases.

The rule changes as read by the government House leader sound benign, but they are really drawn up by the Harris government in order that it can ram through its legislation and policies designed, as I say, to be beneficial to the most powerful and privileged people in this province. The benign wording will fool some. There are some who want to be fooled; there are some out there who want to congratulate this government no matter what it does. I can't deal with those people.

There are a lot of independent-minded people, some of whom agree with what the government is doing, who are concerned. I hope those people aren't fooled by the categories, or by the open letters that people send. The member for Nepean sent an open letter to the leader of the official opposition. I was almost physically ill when I read the letter. In fact, I wrote a letter back to the government House leader and never mailed it to him, because it was somewhat vitriolic, to say the least, in the condemnation of that exercise.

To try to characterize the changes as those which would benefit individual members of this Legislature is absolutely ludicrous. It would be misleading — I'm not saying anybody is misleading, but anybody who would want to characterize those changes, I would say they would be misleading changes; misleading wording would be used. I'm not accusing any member of misleading the House, because I know that's against our rules. I'm not trying to be tricky or funny with that either to get around it. I'm just saying that as I read them, I would laugh if it weren't such a serious matter, when I see how they were characterized.

Everybody recognizes that a healthy democracy requires a vigilant opposition with the ability, when necessary, to slow the government down, to allow for additional debate and discussion and to allow for reflection and reconsideration. I even said that when I was in government. I remember speaking to a number of audiences — you get more speaking requests when you're a minister, obviously, than when you're a member of the opposition — on many occasions where the topic wasn't specific to the ministry with which I was involved, the Ministry of the Environment. When we were talking about the democratic or legislative system, I almost invariably took the opportunity to point out the importance of the opposition. I guess it's a benefit of having sat on both sides of the House that one can see that importance. Yes, it does take longer when the opposition slows things down, but the purpose of the debate out there is important: It's to let the public know what a bill is all about.

1640

The government wants a two-for-one day. Let me give you an example of that: They want to be able to sit one afternoon, with a question period then, but they want to count another legislative day, and that's for purposes of saying, "Oh, we've had enough debate on this bill." They want to use that time in the evening and call it another legislative day.

What is important is that debate take place over a period of time, so that the public at home watching this television channel or through the news media coverage of this place, or for those who are lucky enough now to have the Internet and a computer to get Hansard, because they can't get Hansard any more in the printed form through the kind of subscription they used to — it's important that those people know what the issues are before the House, that they know the arguments on all sides.

The minister usually puts forward what the minister believes is a compelling argument for the legislation; and some other government members. The opposition members sometimes compliment the government, sometimes agree, more often tend to point out the shortcomings of that legislation, and the public finally makes a judgement. But if the government is simply able to ram through its legislation within a couple of days, the public doesn't really become aware of what's happened in this House, and ultimately the public itself is the loser.

We have to draw attention to those issues, and we can do so by debate and by employing other devices. What the government is doing in its motion is not only restricting debate on the part of the opposition; the government is also removing any of the bargaining chips the opposition would have in dealing with the government. When I'm dealing with the government House leader, I can make a suggestion to him that we might be compliant in a certain way if we had an additional day of debate. I'll tell you something: You're taking all the chips away from the opposition.

Now the government House leader will simply be in a position — I'm not saying he's going to — to say, "I'm sorry, I don't have to listen to you people any more, because I have the rules all in my favour and now I will dictate what goes through and when it goes through." Remember, the government House leader is not a person who himself makes those decisions; he is accountable to the Premier, and I can tell you the Premier is always a person who wants to get through a program eagerly and quickly. Not this Premier alone — other Premiers have had the same anxiousness to get through matters they felt were of importance — but certainly I can say that applies to the present Premier as well.

This change we see here, this drastic change to the procedural rules of this House, will be popular with the zealots, will be popular with the extremists, who really think the opposition is only a nuisance, who think the opposition is at best misguided and at worst stupid. They really have no regard for any views other than their own. This government probably has in it, in its apparatus out there, more zealots and more extremists than any government I've seen.

I would have anticipated, and perhaps wrongly, that the New Democratic Party, which was noted as a government with an ideology, which was a government that had certain plans for the province, might have been more zealous, might have been more extreme than it ultimately was; there were times when I disagreed with the government, times when I agreed with it. But I have never witnessed a government, since I've been in this Legislature or watching this Legislature as an individual citizen,

that has more zealots and has more extremists within the apparatus of the government than this government; I'm not saying the members of this Legislature necessarily, but particularly the advisers to this government.

I know where they get this. They get it south of the border. They head down to talk to the Republicans, and I'm not talking of moderate Republicans. I'm not talking of the present defense secretary, Cohen, for instance, who when he was a senator from Maine was considered to be a moderate; or Senator Stafford, whom I had a chance to meet, who was very good on environmental issues, again a New England senator of great reputation. That's not the kind of person they're talking to. They're talking to the Newt Gingrich types, the people who are extreme in their viewpoint, the people who have an agenda for America.

Some of those zealots who advise the government spend a lot of time talking to those individuals, to extreme individuals south of the border, and they genuinely believe in that. When I've looked at the Tory caucus over the years, however, I've seen a lot of people who are pretty middle of the road. They've been more cautious than perhaps others, more small-c conservative than others, but in years gone by they've been fair-minded people; they've been people who have recognized the importance of this place.

A colleague of mine in the Legislature who sat as government House leader was Bob Welch, and Bob Welch, whether you agreed or disagreed on a specific policy with him, was a man who had great regard for this House. He was a good orator in this House. He was a person who would defend the rights of individual members. He was an individual who had a respect for those who disagreed with him. I can't speak for Mr Welch, most certainly, but when I watched him in action and then I watch this government in action I see a major contrast. I can't help but believe that many of the Tories from his era must be very uncomfortable with what they see happening in this Legislature, particularly today when they see these kinds of rule changes.

You see, some of the rule changes that are proposed are designed to keep more things secret in the government. I understand the government views order paper questions as inconvenient, sometimes they may feel they're frivolous or vexatious, those legal words they use that kind of make them not useful questions, not helpful questions, but that's how you can obtain a lot of information. We don't have a five-hour question period in this House. The estimates process doesn't take place in this House any more. So the ability to glean information, important information from the government is not there unless you have order paper questions.

The amount of time it takes for the government to answer — sometimes it may take a little longer to answer. The number of questions overall the government may look at and say, "Gee, I don't know if some of these are really that necessary," but that's how you get the information from the government. Surely an open government, with all the information on the table, is a healthier government than that which wishes to hide information.

My friend Norm Sterling, the member for Carleton, was preoccupied in one of his previous roles as a person responsible for freedom of information. The member for

Renfrew North, who was in the House this afternoon, when paying tribute to him on June 9, I believe mentioned that Mr Sterling was involved with freedom of information and felt very strongly about it on that occasion. Some of the rule changes here would deny that kind of free flow of information that we in the opposition believe is important and I think the public should believe is important.

I look at this whole exercise and how it affects the mood of the House. The House works best when the House leaders and whips, who are specific people with specific roles, can sit down and try to make some decisions on how matters will proceed in the House. When you have those kinds of undertakings, when you have those good meetings, you find out that things do happen, that the government agenda, while it may not pass at the pace the government wants, does pass.

I think this is creating an ugly mood in this House, because all of the thoughts of cooperation which the opposition had in the last few weeks in our discussions have left and the mood has turned ugly. You're going to find confrontations and perhaps even disorder in this House when this government tries to implement these changes, and that's not good for anybody; it's not fun for anybody. I don't think anybody is excited by that kind of circumstance. I prefer strong debate and extensive debate in the House, and I hate the ugliness when it permeates this House. We'll be responsible for some of it and the government will be responsible for some of it. Nobody will have clean hands when that happens. That's most unfortunate because that does bring this House into disrepute.

1650

Look at the tool chest which has been put forward. Remember when the Minister of Education said he was going to provide a tool chest for boards of education to be able to deal with the people who had been nuisances to the boards over the years, and he provided some of that, not all of it, but some of it is in Bill 136, a bill which takes away rights from many people who work in the public sector. I say to them it is not in the interests of democracy to do that. With 82 seats in the Legislature, the government has the opportunity to do as it pleases in any event.

What the government is doing with this, if it doesn't intend to pass it as is, is really putting a gun to the heads of the opposition — speaking figuratively, of course — loading that gun with whatever number, I guess six bullets, and putting it to the heads of the opposition and saying, "Either you agree to some form of rule changes or you agree to put through all of our legislative agenda, or you're going to be stuck with these rules as they are, and you'll be sorry forever."

I get to that and start saying: "Why don't you just close down the Legislature, Mike? Why don't you just say this place isn't important any more? Why don't you just send the members home to get birth certificates quickly for people or to cut ribbons or to do ceremonial things or to be" — I say this in the best sense of the words — "glorified social workers?"

Jonathan Manthorpe — I'm going to say about 1975; it was before I was in this Legislature — wrote a column

about the role of this Legislature. He made a case which I don't agree with, by the way, that members should not have constituency offices, and he said that's because it had made members glorified social workers, that in effect we spent all of our time trying to deal with intricate individual problems to the neglect of what happened in legislative committees and in this House. His solution was to abolish constituency offices. I don't agree with that solution, but I understand what he meant when he said that if members are preoccupied with other things, if there aren't meaningful ways of dealing with government business, then you might as well close down the Legislature, just give the key to the Premier and let him run the province the way he wants to. That's most discouraging to those of us in the opposition and I suspect to some on the government side.

I mentioned earlier that I wanted to compliment the government on not doing something inflammatory. In its package, it did not say it wanted Bill 136 completed before the end of June, which is going to be a controversial bill. The government will ultimately pass the bill because it has the power to do so, but I think there was a recognition there would be considerable debate, hopefully a lot of hearings and perhaps some modifications to the bill. I have to take that back now because under the rules, remember something else that's interesting. I don't know how many members noticed this. The motion says the rules are retroactive to what's going on in the House now, not something for the future, not something to say, "We didn't like what happened in the past, but in the future we're going to do it," but something retroactive.

I'm not a lawyer, so I can't speak to this in a way that a lawyer can. My friends who are lawyers almost invariably express concern about retroactive legislation, and they probably understand better than I or others the ramifications of that. The government under its new rules in the last two weeks of the Legislature could theoretically bring in another bill. They could bring in the son or daughter of Bill 136, which would affect members of the teaching profession, on June 24, and have it passed on June 26 before the Legislature ends. Second reading could be brought in. So no period ahead of time to know anything about; do it right at the end of the year when nobody is watching and get the legislation through. That's one of the consequences of this dynamite package of changes, the grenade which has been rolled into the middle of this Legislature with the pin pulled and waiting for somebody to jump on the grenade or to withdraw the grenade or to dismantle it somehow to make it not effective.

I can say to the government when it says, "We don't have enough time for our members to speak," that all the government has to do is provide more time in the Legislature for the members to speak, take more time with each bill. I'm one who doesn't mind the Legislature sitting for a longer period of time. I read in the letter that was sent to the Leader of the Opposition that the House can't sit beyond 25 weeks or something like that. That's nonsense. The House is sitting now. The opposition does not object to the House sitting. The opposition is prepared to deal with the legislation, and yet it's put out there as though somehow the opposition doesn't want to

work. Again, that's a smarmy approach when I read somewhere somebody saying, "You know, we've got to work a full day," as though when members aren't in this chamber they aren't working. I know people from all parties who are working late into the evening or early in the morning in their offices, or they're back in the constituency, or they're working on the weekend. The suggestion — and it was put out there in this open letter — that somehow members of the Legislature don't work unless the House is sitting is nonsense.

I see that even more for members who represent rural constituencies. The member for Grey-Owen Sound is here and nods in agreement. The member for Renfrew North has a huge riding that he has to deal with. I'm going to tell you it's impossible for people with huge ridings to be in this House every day of the week, and a lot of the work is not done in this House. But of course the suggestion was, just as the government House leader said when asked, "Why are we sitting election day?" "Oh, well, everybody else has to work." The real fact was that if the opposition had said on the bill that ends rent control, "We'll end our debate on Thursday" — the government didn't want to sit on Monday then. It was a bogus argument. I can't use the words I want to use. It was a bogus argument, let me put it that way, but it was put out there as, "Oh, certain people don't want to work on election day." It had nothing to do with it at all. The government was prepared not to, so-called, work on election day.

I look at people like Gary Carr and Toni Skarica and Bill Murdoch, who have expressed openly their concern about what the government is doing. The three of them have paid a price for doing that which is financial and which is I guess social, if you can put it in those terms, because they have dared to speak out against the government agenda, and not only the government agenda but the way the government operates. They're not going to ingratiate themselves to the Premier, I understand that, and they may not make it to the cabinet, but I think they're going to garner a lot more respect and they're going to be able to live with their consciences by being able to express their views as they see them instead of as the Premier would like to hear them. Even those who tell the Premier what he wants to hear are not providing a good service to the Premier.

I can recall in my years in government that the Premier of the day, Premier Peterson, from time to time referred to me as the Leader of the Opposition, because I would on many occasions disagree with something the Premier had said, but I was convinced that he respected someone more who would express that disagreement than those who would nod acquiescently at every suggestion the Premier would make and laugh compliantly at every joke that would be made. I think we serve ourselves better as legislators when we put those views directly to the people who have the greatest power.

1700

I would characterize these changes as dictatorial, as mean-spirited and as not good ultimately for the province. I remember the words of Ernie Eves. Ernie and I are good friends and have been for a number of years. He came in the Legislature in 1981; I came in in 1977. Ernie

had something interesting to say about rule changes — I'll allow myself to go in a different direction for just a moment, because the member for Nickel Belt is here. He will recall probably the day I was angriest in the House, the angriest speech I gave was a speech condemning rule changes made by a previous government. He mentioned to me later — he doesn't mind me saying this, I'm sure — that he hadn't seen me as angry as that day, because I recognize when you get into rule changes in this House, you're really making a difference.

It reminds me of another instance. The member for Nepean purportedly said he doesn't want to see the opposition or 20 members, whoever, block a private member's bill. The Davis government used to do that routinely. That practice was changed, and I like that practice changed.

But do you know what can happen? The government can put members up to bringing a bill into the Legislature in private members' hour which the government doesn't have the intestinal fortitude to place its stamp on and doesn't want to be directly associated with, wants to have its hands clean. It can do that through using one of its members, with a majority of government members supporting it. While that power to block that bill coming to a vote should be used extremely rarely, I'm not convinced that removing that power completely is wise, because of that.

The only time it has been invoked during this Parliament was when Mr Flaherty brought forward a motion to change the rules of this House by using private members' hour. I felt as all members of the Legislature were affected by this, that was one specific instance where that measure could be invoked, and they're going to take that away. Even if the government withdrew this motion this afternoon, it could have one of its own members, using private members' hour, have a motion passed, which would have the same effect and the government could wash its hands.

I want to go back to what Ernie Eves had to say on June 22, 1992, about the rule changes proposed by Mr Cooke of the previous government.

"I think one has to understand that the only way opposition — not just opposition members but any public opposition to any proposed piece of legislation — can be effectively dealt with or talked about under our system of government, under the parliamentary system of government, is through the opposition parties' ability to debate, and yes, on occasion, even stall or slow down the progress of a particular bill, and that has worked very effectively over the years against governments of all political stripes."

I agree with Ernie. He was right on that occasion and he made that argument with a good deal of sincerity and a knowledge of how this House works.

I remember a letter from Norm Sterling, now the Minister of Environment and Energy, the member for the riding of Carleton — it used to have a different name at one time; it was Carleton-Grenville. He wrote a letter to the Ottawa Sun and it was read into the Hansard by Ernie Eves on June 22, 1992. Let me tell you what Mr Sterling had to say:

"Over the past six years in opposition, I have been successful in forcing the government of the day to accept

some amendments to their legislation. My only tool was to delay or threaten to delay. What sense is there for me to bother to debate if I have no means to make them listen?"

That was Norm Sterling, the member for the riding of Carleton, who made that statement, and I agree with him. I think he was right on that occasion; I think he would be right if he said that today.

I want to also say that Mr Eves on another occasion said, "It does get kind of frustrating over here in opposition, when we could be talking about the rule changes in House leaders' meetings, where they're supposed to be dealt with." Again, he was worried about a matter that was before the House instead of the House leaders dealing with these matters, as they should.

Last Thursday, in reacting to the changes which were proposed, I noted that the government was enhancing its reputation as a government of bullies, as a bullying government. That's a reputation unfortunately this government, at least the cabinet and the unelected advisers, have earned. I'm not saying the other members, necessarily, but they have earned it. Indeed, some of the members of the Legislature who are government members know that and in their ridings have seen the consequences of that. Some members of the government caucus swing back, don't simply take the punches, figuratively speaking, but throw a few themselves, and that's seldom appreciated.

I look at all these rules individually and I know that can bore people, when they have to deal with those kinds of rules, those kinds of matters, but on Thursday, June 12, when these were snuck in at about five minutes to 5 as a motion, I said as follows:

"The Harris government has used the iron fist late this afternoon to squelch the opposition by imposing drastic procedural rule changes that will severely restrict the ability of the opposition members to debate and slow down government legislation.

"Under the cover of the federal election, a press conference was held Monday, June 2, at which time the Harris regime, using the MPP for Nepean, revealed proposed parliamentary rule changes hatched in the Office of the Premier and designed to enable the Harris government to ram through controversial and far-reaching legislation with ease and a minimum of debate.

"This afternoon" — I was referring to last Thursday afternoon — "the government tabled a motion to implement its punitive rule changes and indicated that it would proceed with the extreme measure before the House recesses at the end of the month. With this motion, the Harris government has confirmed its reputation as a bully, impatient with any opposition and determined to run roughshod over any who would impede their efforts to force revolutionary change on the province.

"Even those who might agree with some of the legislation proposed by the Harris Conservatives believe the government is moving too quickly, too drastically and without considering the consequences of its actions. It is outrageous that the backroom boys in the Premier's office will render the Ontario Legislature powerless with the passage of one motion. The only honourable course of action is the immediate withdrawal of this mean-spirited

measure. Democracy is under assault by Mike Harris and his revolutionaries and must be defended rigorously."

Yes, those are strong words. I was vehement in my opposition to what the government was doing. But I think they're an accurate reflection of what is happening in this Legislature this afternoon.

What the government is looking for in some of the provisions is rather interesting to note. The Harris government is asking for a two-for-one special on democracy. They want the ability to proceed with two sessional days in one 24-hour period without two corresponding question periods. They want to be able to move faster, with less accountability, at a time when most Ontarians feel this government already moves too quickly and too recklessly without considering the consequences of their actions.

1710

They want to reduce speaking times and limit access to inspection through order paper questions. This limits the ability of elected members to hold the government accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

By the way, I don't know how many of my fellow members noted — I don't know if I'll be able to find it quickly — the new order which is proposed by the government, an order which will place question period way down the list. The members of the news media, whose editors' eyes may glaze over at the thought of rule changes, should note what this means by those rule changes. It says the following:

"That standing order 30 be deleted and the following substituted:

"30(a) The routine proceedings before the orders of the day are as follows": first of all, members' statements, (2) reports by committees, (3) introduction of bills, (4) motions, (5) statements by the ministry and responses, (6) deferred votes, (7) question period.

You can see that the government wants to manage the news, wants to push question period back so far that it will affect the deadlines of those who have to meet newspaper and electronic media deadlines — pretty machiavellian if you look at it. There are a lot of people who will say, "Aren't they clever?" Mostly it's the people who do this themselves, who talk to one another and say: "Aren't we clever people? Look what we've done. We have shown the opposition and we've pushed question period way down."

The American legislators who were here today saw something, when they were here visiting during question period, that they don't have in their legislative bodies. They don't have a question period. Many of them, if they're on the government side, are anxious about that; in other words, anxious not to have it implemented. Those in the minority, as they call it, or opposition, think it's a great idea that we have a question period, that we have accountability.

I can tell you, as a minister I never looked forward to question period, because it was a time of great tension. It was a time when a member could raise something we had never thought would be raised or no one in our ministry might have brought to our attention. It meant not only answering the question in the House but also having to go out into the hallway into what we call a scrum, where

the media gathers to question us about those matters of the day. But it's important for democracy. It keeps us on our toes, it keeps all governments on their toes.

When you relegate question period to the end of all these proceedings, you're showing your disdain for that particular institution. But the purpose is this: They don't want the opposition to use any of the other items, like reports by committees or introduction of bills or motions, to be able to slow down the process, so they put it there.

They're also suggesting that orders of the day, regardless of what happens, shall start at 4 o'clock. Most of the time they do anyway and most of the time they should, but there are occasions when other matters take precedence, and those other matters will no longer be able to take precedence because of the rule changes implemented by this government.

When I say I can't believe these have anything to do with the member for Nepean, anxious as he might be to please the Premier, when I say that, it's because the changes are technical. The changes are developed by those who know what goes on in this House and how a government can best dominate what goes on in this Legislature.

The federal House is mentioned from time to time. They say, "This is done in the federal House" or "That's done in the federal House." There are 20 opposition days in the federal House. I'm sorry, I did not see this. Maybe the House leader for the NDP saw something for 20 opposition days. He saw that in the federal rules. Did you see it in the proposed package from the government? No, we did not see that. They've cherry-picked, they've selected those rules which they think would be convenient for the government to place in this motion before the Legislature. That's what they've chosen.

They also say: "What about the time? The federal members don't get to speak as long as we do in the provincial House." No, they don't. There are 301 members of the federal House; there will be 103 members of the provincial House. In other words, they have three times as many members as we have.

I say to members of this House, look carefully at those rule changes. They are not motivated as we would hope they would be motivated. I can't impute motives — we're not allowed to do this in the House — but I simply say that this package is designed to help only the members of the government and not the members of the opposition, and not, when you look at the real detail of them, the individual members of the government caucus.

There's a key paragraph at the beginning. This is humorous, only it's too serious to be humorous. It says at the very beginning, in the preamble:

"The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members" — wrong from the beginning. That's not the purpose.

The purpose says it is to make it expedient for the government:

"(i) to submit motions, resolutions and bills for the consideration of the assembly and its committees, and to have them determined by democratic vote;

"(ii) to debate, speak to, and vote on motions, resolutions and bills;

"(iii) to hold the government accountable for its policies; and

"(iv) collectively, to decide matters submitted to the assembly or a committee."

I can tell you that's not the purpose of these rule changes. It's exactly the opposite purpose of these rule changes.

The key paragraph at the end of the section on members' rights reads as follows:

"The standing orders shall not be interpreted or applied in a manner that permits a member to obtain a procedural or tactical advantage by contravening a standing order."

This of course could be used by the Speaker to shut down any delaying tactics, because the clause is wide open to interpretation. It's okay as long as we have the present people in the chair: yourself, Ms Churley, M. Morin, Speaker Stockwell. But if we ever had a situation where we had a government toady in the chair — and that can happen; it may have happened in the past; it may have happened in other parliaments — where you have somebody simply willing to do what the Premier wants in the chair, if that situation ever arose, that wide-open-to-interpretation clause would be used against the opposition. We're fortunate now, and I say this in all sincerity, that the members we have sitting in the chair who have these official positions do not fit that description or that definition. But it could happen in the future.

They've eliminated the need for an extended-hours motion. There are times when that resolution is not needed, where the opposition says, "I don't think we need to debate that." In fact, last Wednesday what Bud Wildman, the House leader for the NDP, and I did was approach the government and say: "We don't think you should just have to deal with the matter of the extended hours today. Why not bring in the Waterloo bill as well? We'll use half-and-half time for those."

It worked very well. We had one speech by the Liberals, one speech by the NDP, one speech by the government representative, and the bill passed, not only second reading but third reading. Why? Because there was consensus, agreement and no need to slow up that kind of legislation or to block that legislation. That's how the House can work well. There are many times when we have not used the extended-hours motion. We simply say, "Let's forget about that and let's deal with some bills," and that works out all right.

I mentioned the two-for-one special. The minute the government House leader, who has to put a good face on this — I'm not blaming him personally, but he has to put the good face on it, otherwise he'll face the wrath of the Premier. Those who have dealt with the caucus in caucus meetings know what that's like. Certain members of the caucus who are in the House today know that the wrath of the Premier is something to behold, as do members of cabinet as well.

1720

He says to the House: "Well, you know, we are providing additional time for debate. We're going to let us debate from 6:30 to 9:30." What he doesn't say is, "We're going to count that as an additional legislative day, so that when we want to bring in a time allocation motion, we'll be able to get a bill through in two days

instead of three days at maximum." It's disguised and portrayed as a motion favourable to more debate, but in fact it's a motion designed to restrict debate in this Legislature.

It says they're going to eliminate the need for a House calendar by getting rid of standing order 10(a). That means the government does not need the permission of the Speaker to sit when the calendar does not have the House scheduled to sit. With this proposal, the government unilaterally brings the House back when it pleases. We may as well not have a parliamentary calendar. I prefer to have the Speaker with that power. I can't remember a Speaker ever denying the government the opportunity to come back, but I would like to have that in the hands of an individual who is independent of the Premier, an individual who has to use his or her own good judgement and the able assistance of the people at the table, the clerks who advise you on many of these matters.

The government says if it loses a quorum on Thursday morning during private members' business, that doesn't affect the rest of the day. That is saying that private members' business is not as important as government business in the afternoon.

Points of privilege: The Speaker is going to listen to the first point of privilege and then can shut down related points of privilege. Frankly, Mr Speaker, you can do that today. It doesn't often happen. The Speaker is usually pretty good at listening to a few points of privilege, all the Speakers we've had. But eventually the Speaker can say, even after one if it's a bogus point of privilege — and I must confess to bringing points of privilege, from time to time, that bordered on not being points of privilege. But the Speaker of the day has said, "Thank you, but that's not a point of privilege," and there has been no further point of privilege on that. But points of privilege are important. I don't deny the Speaker the right to say, "That's not a point of privilege," but I think the government is tampering with something that's pretty sacred to this House.

The Speaker may adjust voting times and adjournment times if there has been a delay as a result of grave disorder. That's going to work to the convenience of the government, no question about that.

No interrupting the Speaker when he or she has risen to speak, making a ruling or putting a question to the House. The new wording is "putting a question." I didn't know you could interrupt the Speaker in any event, legally and legitimately. We're all supposed to know that when the Speaker rises, to indicate that he or she is speaking, the rest of us are supposed to sit down and listen to what the Speaker says or face legitimate chastisement by the Speaker. That's one rule of this House that should always be adhered to. But the putting of a question is because they're afraid the opposition might question something about the putting of a question, because the government at one point in time is going to want to put a question so that there's no further debate. I suspect that could happen with this debate.

Points of privilege not relating to the day's events require a one-and-a-half-hour notice. The Speaker may rule on these without debate in the House. There may be

something in your riding that happened in Stratford on a particular day and you didn't have the opportunity to give notice of an hour and a half previously. I don't want to see you denied the opportunity to rise on that point of privilege simply because you haven't given an hour-and-a-half notice to the Speaker. The Speaker may rule quickly whether he believes you are in order or not in order, Speaker Stockwell, for instance, who is usually in the chair at the beginning of the day, but I want you to have the right to raise that without sending a notice an hour and a half ahead of time, because it may be a matter that has arisen quite recently, just before the House convenes for consideration of matters.

Eliminating the allowance of a motion that a member now be heard. That certainly will be in favour of the government.

Speaking time is reduced from 90 minutes to 40 minutes for leadoffs. The standard 30-minute speeches are reduced to 20 minutes. After five hours of debate, the speaking times are 10 minutes. I know they like to say it's a House of Commons, which, as I pointed out earlier, has three times as many members as we have in this House.

Every time you limit the amount of debate, you make the opposition move to extraordinary measures to make itself heard. All of this shutting down of democracy, the restricting of committee hearings, the restricting of consultation, the restricting of debate, tends to militate in favour of people going outside the legislative process to take action. People should be condemned for taking extreme action outside the legislative process. But it becomes more understandable, when they believe their day in court is not allowed to them, that they begin to take extreme action to express views opposite to those of the government.

The speaking times, then, I think are important. What we have done in opposition to help speed the process for the government is that we have asked permission to split the speaking time. We ask for unanimous consent to split it among a number of members. That way they have all been satisfied with the right to speak, the points have been made in opposition to the government legislation and very often a bill will take one or two days, sometimes three, to pass second reading. That method can be used, and we use it. We don't necessarily use, as we are today, the full 90 minutes for one speaker.

If the House is scheduled to sit at 6:30 and adjournment procedures have not concluded, the Speaker may deem them so at 6:25. Again, designed to accommodate the government. The two-for-one special does not require notice. That's the two-for-one special where the government says: "We're not satisfied we've had the afternoon session. We want at any time to be able to have an evening session from 6:30 to 9:30, and we don't have to tell the opposition about that." The opposition critics or others with a specific interest in a bill might well have headed back to their ridings for special events or circumstances in their ridings, and the government would not have to tell them about this, just spring it on them at the last minute, and there it is, implemented. Again, most unfair, undemocratic, but it will please the people who advise the Premier, the unelected people in the Premier's

office and outside the Premier's office who talk about matters that relate to this House.

The Speaker may rule out of order any motion he or she deems to have been moved for the purposes of delay. As far as I can recall, the Speaker can rule motions out of order in any event, but this is putting something specific in. We're fortunate when we have you in the chair or when we have M. Morin or Ms Churley or Speaker Stockwell, but what happens if we get a government toady in the chair, somebody who wants to please the Premier, please the cabinet? Then this could be invoked, to the detriment of the opposition.

The government House leader "may," instead of "must," do a business statement on the upcoming week. Isn't it nice to know at the concluding of one week what has been agreed upon to deal with next week, instead of having it be a surprise, so members can prepare their consideration of the bills?

There are three sessional days allotted for budget debate. The government can do that now. Who cares? Why don't they just do it now if that's so important to the government?

The concurrence in supply is limited to one day of debate. The debate on interim supply is limited to one day of debate. Let me tell you what that means. Those two debates — and you would know this as Speaker — are debates where members can discuss a wide-ranging number of topics, can look at the expenditures of the government, whether they're decreasing or increasing, and can on a very broad basis canvass significant issues of the day. The government is going to restrict that to one day. That excellent opportunity to deal with issues of importance to the opposition would be restricted to one day instead of several days.

Government bills may be introduced during the last two weeks of a session, with allowance to proceed to second reading. Again, the government could hide much of its controversial legislation to the end, if it saw fit, and then spring that legislation on this Legislature and have it sit past for second reading.

1730

If they do it before that two-week period of time, the government is quite entitled to proceed with the bill, and I accept that. This is what is called, I think my friend Mr Wildman said, the Ernie Eves rule. The former House leader of the Conservative Party said this should be in place. I agreed with him then. I hope he has the same view now and will be able to convince the Premier's advisers that indeed that should be taken out, because that does allow for great difficulty in terms of the opposition — and I say that in the broad sense rather than just opposition members — being able to deal with a bill.

The answering of order paper questions from 14 to 45 days: It's nice to be able to get that information early and I'll tell you why. The session may be ending, and the government, if it has some embarrassing information that must be provided, by extending the time to answer those questions to 45 days, could always wait until the session has ended, or if an election is coming up, wait until the election happens, where the writ is issued and the government never has to answer that question. The government can give an interim answer in any event.

Standing committees shrink to nine members. That's a strange one. Only five Conservative MPPs, three Liberals and one New Democrat would sit on a committee. That again, I think, restricts the government in its ability to have its members play a meaningful role. As well, it limits the NDP to only one member of a committee, and that's often difficult because we have to be in many places at once and it's good to have more than one member allowed.

When two sessional days occur on the same calendar day, a single Orders and Notices paper will be printed. I don't have any trouble with that. There are a few things that are found in there that are benign.

The last thing I mention and I must underline is that these rules affect all legislation retroactively. The government didn't like the way things were, so it's going to go back in history and make changes which will affect that which took place before, which was introduced previously.

We find ourselves in a debate that many hoped we would never find ourselves in. I had hoped this afternoon that some of our members would be dealing with legislation. I had hoped we would be dealing with such things as safety on the highways, the comprehensive bill that the government brought in. I had hoped we would be dealing with other pieces of legislation where there's a general consensus. I was prepared to accept that the government would deal with some of its legislation with which I don't agree but which we should be dealing with. Here we are this afternoon dealing with drastic, extreme changes to the procedures of this House instead of dealing with important government legislation.

If all of these bills were so important, one may legitimately ask, why did the government not bring those bills in today to deal with instead of this procedural change? The reason is that the people in the Premier's office are not happy. The people in the Premier's office don't like the rules of this House and therefore they're forcing the government House leader, through the member for Nepean, to suggest changes to the House and its rules.

I wish the government would not do this. The best course of action the government can take is to withdraw this motion. It has shown its hand. It can say to the opposition, "Here's what we could do but we won't," and it may have a sobering effect on members who are contemplating some rare but extreme legislative action or parliamentary tactics. But I think this group has too many zealots to withdraw this.

The government House leaders says it's negotiable. Well, when you start negotiating, you buy into the process. I don't believe in buying into what I believe is a bad process. The House leader of the New Democratic Party and I have at no time stated that we're not prepared to discuss matters of procedure and some changes; we have indicated this to the government House leader. But they're eager to rush this through now because the government, you may or may not know, Mr Speaker, has more revolutionary legislation coming in that it believes will engender a good deal of opposition in this province.

I say to all the people who watch this parliamentary channel: You all have a stake in this. Now, if there's any

legislation that could affect your particular group or you as an individual, the government will be able to much more easily ram that legislation through this House. Your rights could be abrogated as a result of that legislation, but you'll have little recourse but to accept it.

The government House leader tries to sound, as he can, a reasonable person, but he's a reasonable person selling an unreasonable package. I believe there may be members on the government side, newly elected, who believe that they will never be in opposition, that somehow a new dynasty has begun, that we'll see 42 years of Conservative power again. I doubt that many members who have been here awhile believe that. They know the electorate is volatile. They know that change takes place quickly in terms of political allegiances at election time, even during a campaign.

I think some of those people know that if these rules are passed, all the persuasive powers of people who abhor this kind of procedure, these kinds of rules, will not convince a subsequent Premier or a subsequent government House leader to change those rules. You gain a lot more respect as a government, as a person, as an institution, when you face a circumstance where you have a power, where you have the ability to bully, where you have the ability to get your way and you don't exercise that simply because you possess that power. That speaks well of an individual, that speaks well of a government, that speaks well of an organization when you do not use the strength or the power you have to get your way, but rather you are benevolent and considerate of others.

The Speaker who is listed as the Speaker has returned and it reminds me of the fact that as a member in opposition and to a certain extent in government he was vociferous, was demanding of the government and was a person who really believed in this institution and in fairness. I could be wrong; I don't think I am. When the last set of rules was passed under the auspices of Mr Cooke, the government House leader of the day, and voted for by some of the members of the Conservative caucus, I don't think the present Speaker voted for those rules and I don't think certain other members of the Conservative caucus voted for those rules, and with good reason.

I can recall there were certain NDP members during the NDP government who did not vote for closure motions or for time allocation motions. I think the same could be said to be true of this government, that there were members of this government who, when the government employed closure or time allocation, did not vote for those motions, because they are extremely important to us.

I began by saying that this is probably the most important legislative initiative to come forward from this government, the one which has the most far-reaching ramifications, the one which has the most effect, ultimately, on the people of this province, on the news media, on the opposition, on all members of this House.

But it won't be characterized that way. It will receive scant attention in the news media, and therefore the government will know that nobody is really looking carefully at what it's doing and the government will know it can get away with these changes. But in their conscience, will government members really believe they

have done the right thing by allowing these changes to take place? Is democracy not more important than making the trains run on time?

The statement "making the trains run on time" refers to efficiency in government. There are those over the years who have established a reputation for efficiency, and there is a certain amount of envy of those who are efficient. There is always applause among the extremists, among the very committed, among the zealots, particularly those unelected, when governments proceed in an expeditious and efficient manner.

But our democracy is best served when there is a strong and influential opposition, with the tools to be able to slow down and, on very rare occasions, halt the government for a short period of time to allow it to reconsider, to allow it to reflect, to allow it to make changes to its own legislative initiatives. This can only happen under the rules we have in the Legislature at this time. To take away these opportunities is to diminish the role of members of this House. This Legislature, if this motion passes, will be a much more insignificant place than it has been for many years since I've been in the House.

1740

Mr Wildman: I only have a few minutes left today, since these rules have not been passed and the government can't unilaterally extend the day, so I will make a few introductory remarks and then get into the main part of my speech the next time, which I suspect may be tomorrow. But again, because there's so little cooperation from the government at this point, we don't know for certain that we're going to be debating this matter tomorrow because the government doesn't have the courtesy to tell us.

I want to make a couple of points in opening my remarks. Let's be very realistic here: We understand what this is about. The government has introduced this motion with an enormous number of rule changes, some of them not so important and others very significant, that will make it possible for the government to move forward its agenda much more quickly than it has. Why have they done it at this point? They've done it because they want to hold a stick over the opposition, over the Legislative Assembly.

The government House leader seems to have taken as his text that comment from Teddy Roosevelt, "Walk softly and carry a big stick," because that's what this is. This is a big stick. In other words, the government introduces these proposed rule changes and, to use another analogy, it's like the sword of Damocles over the head of the opposition so they can try to force other pieces of legislation through the rest of this month and then in August, if they decide to come back, against the calendar of the Legislature, in August. Then if things don't go well as far as the government is concerned, they can drop the sword on to Damocles: the opposition in this House. But they're not just going to affect the opposition; they're going to be affecting the way democracy works in this province.

I don't pretend to be dramatic here. I think it's important that we understand the importance of these changes. Some might wonder why, as a member of the New

Democratic Party, I am raising these concerns, because, as the government House leader has been wont to do, he has pointed out that there have been rule changes by both opposition parties when they were in government. And that's true; there have been. The difference, and I think it's a very important difference, is that there was significant debate and discussion, particularly among House leaders, before rule changes proceeded, at least the last time.

I just want to refer to some comments made by the member for Parry Sound in June 1992, because he was in this place, where I am right now, when the rule changes took place. These are a couple of comments the member for Parry Sound made as the House leader for the third party at that time:

"I believe it is essential that we change the rules only by consensus of all three parties. Sure, any government, I suppose, that has a majority can change them unilaterally; none ever has in the province of Ontario and now none will up to this date.

"We were hoping of course that the government would not proceed unilaterally and it did not, although a government of the day can do it if it has a majority. I think this place only works when there's a spirit of goodwill among all three parties, and in particular among all three House leaders. If any government ever did proceed unilaterally with rule changes, it would become a very acrimonious place indeed."

That's what Ernie Eves, the member for Parry Sound, said in 1992. I want to repeat that last statement: "If any government ever did proceed unilaterally with rule changes, it would become a very acrimonious place indeed." I think the member for Parry Sound spoke with some prophecy when he made that statement.

He also said: "In the 12 years, almost, that I've been in this assembly" — referring to the length of time he had served prior to 1992 — "all three parties have been in power and all three parties have had various House leaders. If that spirit and that element of trust is not there, I don't think it matters what the rules are, quite frankly; this place is not going to operate."

That, I think, explains how this place operates and has operated. It warns members who have only served in government and have never served on this side of the aisle about what can happen, no matter what the rules of the place are. The member for Parry Sound was quite right when he said, "If that spirit and that element of trust is not there, I don't think it matters what the rules are, quite frankly; this place is not going to operate."

I warn the government and the government House leader: If this government moves forward unilaterally with rule changes against the wishes of the members of this House and against the rights of the minority, this place will not operate. Essentially, every time there's a rule change, do you know what happens? The members of the opposition start thinking about how to get around the new rules, and the more difficult it is, the more acrimonious this place is.

The government House leader said in introducing this debate that this is sometimes seen as a rather rambunctious place. I think that was the word he used. Mark my words, it's going to be a hell of a lot more rambunctious

if you bring in these rule changes. Rule changes, no matter how designed, do not make things better in this place if they are done unilaterally; they only make things worse.

Why is it that the opposition has had to revert to such drastic measures as they have on a couple of occasions? Frankly, it's because we don't have any other option. The only power the opposition has in a majority House is to hold up the government, and if the government continues to bring in rule changes that make it difficult for the opposition to hold them up, there are more and more drastic measures taken to achieve that end, and that will happen no matter what the rules are.

So the member for Parry Sound was quite correct when he said, "If any government ever did proceed unilaterally with rule changes, it would become a very acrimonious place indeed." I hope the member for Parry Sound is saying that at the cabinet table as the government considers moving on these rule changes.

1750

I think the other comment I quoted is even more important. "If that spirit and that element of trust is not there, I don't think it matters what the rules are, quite frankly; this place is not going to operate." If a government moves on its own unilaterally and changes the rules for its benefit, no matter how much they try to dress it up as trying to protect the rights of individual members, if it can make the rules work so that they can make the trains run on time, to use that phrase that was used in Italy in the 1930s, the trains may in fact run on time for a little while but then the government is going to find that somebody has blown up the tracks and the trains aren't going to operate at all.

This government cannot, even if it wants to, rule by decree. This government believes that this place, this assembly is a nuisance. It holds things up; it makes things take too long. There's too much talk, too much debate, as if they don't understand that that's what this place is actually for: talk and debate. It's a nuisance. It would be far easier if the Premier, after the policy and priorities committee meeting, could simply say: "This is the way it's going to be. As of such-and-such a date, this new law, this new regulation, will be in place." It would be a lot easier for him.

There have been governments that have operated that way, even in the western hemisphere. I won't mention them because I might be accused then of comparing the Premier to some rather unsavory characters. But it wouldn't necessarily be a good thing even for the government and it certainly would not be a good thing for this province if the government could operate that way.

I know it's hard for some of you to understand this, but sometimes even this Premier and the senior cabinet ministers can make a mistake. Sometimes those kinds of errors can be ferreted out through spirited debate in this assembly; not often, I'll admit, but sometimes that can happen. That's why it's important to have vigorous debate on controversial pieces of legislation, so that we do look at the possible ramifications of various elements in the bills and we determine if there should be amendments and changes.

I know amendments sometimes take too long as far as the government is concerned. It actually slows down the process. It's as if sometimes you have to set the train on to a siding and have a look at the train and say, "Maybe there are some things that need to be repaired before we proceed down the track" — maybe, but that's what this place is for. These rule changes proposed by the government House leader are designed to make it very, very difficult for the train ever to be moved on to a siding, for there ever to be sober second thought, to use the term that is used in Parliament.

I want to refer to that for a moment. I am no fan of the Senate. I think that institution is an anachronism that should be eliminated. But it's important to understand that if you're going to cherry-pick some of the rules from the House of Commons that make it possible to get bills through more quickly, in the House of Commons, after a bill is passed, it has to go through the same process again to get through Parliament. That is not the case here. We don't want a bicameral system here. We do not want two Houses. But we want to make certain that this assembly is able to do the job in a way that makes it unnecessary to have the sober second thought of a second House.

I think it's interesting too that when the government argues, "We've just brought in some of the rules from the House of Commons," they ignore a number of significant differences. For one thing, they haven't brought in all the rules. They've cherry-picked, by coincidence, rules that are convenient to the government. They haven't brought in rules that benefit individual members or members of the opposition. As my friend from St Catharines pointed out, in the House of Commons rules there are 20 opposition days in a session — 20, not the few that we have.

Some might argue that in the House of Commons there are a lot more members. There are. That's another difference. There are three times as many members in the House of Commons as there are in this Legislative Assembly. So when you want to limit the number of

minutes that each member has to speak, you can understand why they have shorter speaking times in the House of Commons than they have here, because they have three times as many potential speakers.

You can't just take some of the rules from the House of Commons and dump them into this place and say "They worked there for the government, and therefore they should be transferrable to this place," unless you're going to look at all of them. This government doesn't want to look at all of them, because no matter how they try to dress up these rule changes as trying to protect the rights of the individual members, what it is about is getting the trains to run on time without having to go on to any sidings, without having to change anything.

What is worse, I think the most invidious part of this proposal is not how it relates to the members of this assembly but how it relates to the public. The changes that are proposed by the government House leader will make it possible for a government to pass a controversial piece of legislation by introducing it for first reading on Monday, debating it that evening for second reading, the next day for second reading and the next evening for second reading and then bringing in time allocation and getting it through in less than a week, and the public won't even know it has been introduced and the public will not have a say and will not be involved.

Speaker, I recognize that it is close to 6 o'clock. I am going to adjourn my remarks now, but I want to emphasize that I'm going to be quoting at length what the honourable member for Parry Sound had to say about rule changes, and I only hope he will be reiterating those views about process to his colleague the government House leader and to the Premier as they proceed on this wrong track for the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1758.

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line	Should read:
192	10116	1	53	there were 55,900 housing starts in Ontario in the first quarter
203	10556	2	18	sexual assaults, all dismissed because it took too long to get
204	10602	1	56	Rexdale did. I think a lot of people who represent urban

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
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Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
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Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)		Wood, Bob (PC)
Corwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	London South / -Sud	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Niagara South / -Sud	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		Galt, Doug (PC)
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Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Oakville South / -Sud	Vacant
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Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
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Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	
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Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)		

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Parry Sound	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough West / -Ouest	Brown, Jim (PC)
Perth	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Simcoe Centre / -Centre	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)
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Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
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Quinte	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC)	Timiskaming	Ramsay, David (L)
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Riverdale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Welland-Thorold	Kormos, Peter (ND)
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		Yorkview	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Bruce Smith, Bud Wildman
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Granum

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 17 June 1997

Mardi 17 juin 1997

Speaker
Honourable Chris Stockwell

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Chris Stockwell

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 juin 1997

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On behalf of students, teachers and parents, I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for backing down and providing proper funding to the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board for special needs students at the McHugh schools. After continual questioning in the Legislature culminating with yesterday's question by our party leader, Dalton McGuinty, the Minister of Education admitted the error of his ways and ended his game of political brinkmanship in which the government chose to bargain hardball-style with some of the neediest in our society.

The students at the McHugh schools comprise students throughout eastern Ontario with one or more emotional or learning disorders. The program is both highly esteemed and deemed worthy by anyone familiar with it. It seems the legacy of this government will be one that to achieve their shortsighted goals, in the words of the Conservative member for Ottawa-Rideau, they will resort to, and I quote, "extortion and blackmail."

The member for Ottawa-Rideau also stated: "I don't think there's any possibility of the government getting any of this money. I don't think they're entitled to it. This money was taken from Ottawa taxpayers for Ottawa schools." I couldn't agree more.

Now that the minister has withdrawn his threat to the McHugh students, he should go one step further and end his attempt to try to extort \$31 million, which is a tax grab from Ottawa Board of Education taxpayers.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Yesterday in this House the Minister of Education and Training made a shocking and disgusting statement. He said initially, "I don't believe we'll ever be done combating discrimination, combating racism." But rather than giving hope of continuing leadership, the minister then said that it was all right to disband his ministry's anti-discrimination and equal opportunity branch. Among the work produced by this branch was a guide on how to deal with hate groups to be used by principals and teachers in schools where these despicable groups are making their presence felt.

We have seen the effects most recently right here in Metro Toronto. High school students at Weston Collegiate Institute have been subjected to pamphleteering by

a group called Christian Standard. Why? Because the school has allowed Muslim students to pray on Fridays in the school auditorium. Luckily the guidebook for dealing with hate groups has been made available to teachers, but not by the Minister of Education and Training. When his office refused to release this guidebook, it was produced by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

The minister and this government ought to hang their heads in shame. They have consistently denied the problems of racism and discrimination and prejudice that still exist in our society. They have abdicated their responsibility as an elected government to show leadership and meet these problems head-on so that the day will come when we are in fact done with combating racism in Ontario society.

JOHN SETTERFIELD AND ALLAN HEATLEY

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): June is Seniors' Month in Ontario. Last week in Brampton I had the honour of attending the annual Brampton Arts Council Person of the Year reception. This year was a little different because we had two seniors who were co-winners of this award.

I am pleased to inform the Legislature that the Brampton musicians John Setterfield and Allan Heatley accepted the honour last Wednesday, exactly 65 years to the day after the pair first joined the Brampton Citizens' Band in 1932. They have now served Brampton's oldest musical organization for 65 years, quite an accomplishment indeed.

They still sit beside each other in the band today when they play at local events. They've been great solo clarinetists and both have been members of the executive committee and on many award-winning teams that the Brampton Citizens' Band has been involved in. It's very difficult to determine the number of hours these fine gentlemen volunteer collectively to the band, but it's estimated that they've put in as many as 20,000 hours over those years.

I want to congratulate John Setterfield and Allan Heatley, two exemplary Bramptonians, each of whom is now Brampton Arts Council Person of the Year.

FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My constituency office continues to be inundated by requests from frustrated single parents trying to contact the Family Responsibility Office.

One mother wrote: "My children last received support in June 1996. I have been faxing, phoning and leaving messages. You'd think someone could at least contact me."

However, the government claims that 50% of the calls are being returned by the Family Responsibility Office. Bravo. Indeed, we are all very proud of that. It is a step in the right direction. But what about the other half of the children who are left suffering? When is the rubber going to meet the road?

Your government claims that the Family Responsibility Office has virtually eliminated cheque processing problems. My constituents say, "Show us the money." We receive calls from mothers who have had to sell their property, keep their children home from school, or find two jobs.

One constituent has never received support payments since her court order over a year ago. Her ex's arrears are in excess of \$17,000 and he is in the US. If he skips that country, her children may never receive the support they deserve. Another mother has not received money since August 1996, while her ex's employer continues to give the Family Responsibility Office the runaround about why the money has not been sent.

The calls just keep coming. We ask the minister to just do something.

SAWMILL IN COCHRANE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is about the sawmill in my riding of Cochrane and its ability to continue full operations during the year 1997-98. It employs approximately 150 people. We know, from the discussions I've had over last two weeks with MNR and the Mallette-Tembec forestry people as well as the mayor of Cochrane and other delegations from Smooth Rock Falls and Iroquois Falls, that they are trying to resolve the issue. The fact remains that the economy of Cochrane very much depends on this sawmill continuing operations on a full-time basis rather than having it shut down for three, four, six months of the year as a result of cutbacks that have happened within MNR.

We've seen close to 2,000 employees being laid off within MNR throughout northeastern and northwestern Ontario, and now we're seeing that issues that should be resolved in six months or a year are taking two or three years in order to resolve them. We don't know when the end is going to be in sight.

As a result we have a mill where the morale of the people should be good; Spruce Falls, which is owned by Tembec, is one of the top 500 profit-making companies in Canada and they own this mill as well. But without the proper wood supply and arrangements to be able to exchange wood between the mills, that mill is in jeopardy. The Minister of Natural Resources should be looking into this as quickly as possible.

1340

ARNPRIOR AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr W. Leo Jordan (Lanark-Renfrew): The Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital has been embracing this government's principles of integrated health services, including establishing the first hospital-owned and -operated nursing home in Ontario and operating a primary health care centre. More recently, the hospital

became a founding member of the Ottawa Valley Hospital Alliance, which in two short years of cooperative effort among four hospitals has identified savings and revenue opportunities of nearly \$2 million.

Arnprior is located in one of the fastest-growing population areas in Ontario and will experience a growth rate in excess of 30% over the next 10 years. The hospital has one of the busier emergency departments in eastern Ontario, being some 60 kilometres from the closest large urban centre.

It has been noted that, although Arnprior is in Renfrew county, for the purposes of regional planning it has a closer affinity with Ottawa-Carleton. Arnprior is developing a health care governance structure as part of the Ottawa-Carleton-Renfrew district.

It gives me great pleasure at this time to recognize the mayor of Arnprior, the chairman of the board and members of the board of Arnprior and Almonte present in the members' gallery.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): The Harris government is at it again. With his iron fist, Mike Harris is once again attempting to sledgehammer the opposition by imposing anti-democratic rule changes that will severely restrict the ability of the opposition members to debate and make it possible for the public to understand what legislation they're about to propose.

Under the cover of the federal election, a press conference was held on Monday, June 2, at which time they snuck in this anti-democratic series of rule changes supposedly from the member for Nepean, rule changes hatched in the Office of the Premier and designed to enable the Harris government to ram through controversial and far-reaching rule changes that will gag the opposition and the people of Ontario who dare to question the revolutionary agenda.

The Harris government is once again confirming its reputation as a raging bull, impatient with any opposition and determined to run roughshod over anyone who would dare to slow down their schemes to force revolutionary change on the province. First there was Bill 26 with its extraordinary powers. Then there was the megacity bill where they refused to listen to 400,000 people who said no.

They already have a majority government. What else do they need to silence the opposition? What draconian anti-democratic legislation are they planning to introduce next? Universal fingerprinting? More tax cuts for their rich friends? It is clear that Mike Harris needs a sledgehammer to allow the plans of his whiz kids to become a law unto themselves. Stop the sledgehammer now. Wake up, Ontario.

CANADA SUMMER GAMES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I am delighted this afternoon to be able to bring some good news to the Legislature. This morning the Minister of Citizenship in Ottawa announced that the London Alliance has been chosen as the host for the Canada Summer Games in 2001.

The London Alliance is a very enthusiastic group of people from the city of London, the city of Woodstock, the city of St Thomas, the city of Grand Bend and the University of Western Ontario who joined together to absolutely, as we say, blow away the games selection committee. On a very rainy, very stormy day we still managed to show the enthusiasm that we have in all of those centres for hosting the games.

I am very pleased that the Minister of Citizenship and Culture today recognized the importance of provincial partnership in that alliance and has confirmed the provincial support for the games. That's an essential part.

These games are projected to generate about \$61 million of business in the London, Woodstock, St Thomas and Grand Bend area and over 737 jobs during the next four years. So it is an economic as well as a recreational and community event and we should all be very proud of the alliance.

SHEILA WILLIAMS

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I rise in the House today to honour a very special mother, wife, grandmother and generous contributor to her community. Sheila Williams, a community leader at Rama First Nations, died last week as a result of an unfortunate car accident.

Mrs Williams has spent her life helping others and was a positive guiding light for her 12 children. Rising each morning at 4 or 5, she and her lifelong husband would discuss the current issues of their children and community over a steaming cup of tea.

For the past 20 years Mrs Williams worked in the administration building at the band office. Her husband, Leland, is a Rama First Nations councillor and elder and has sat on council since 1950.

Her community was important to Mrs Williams. She took great pride in being a native woman and loved speaking her language. In what little free time she had, she helped with the planning of the new seniors' complex at Rama.

Mrs Williams is the mother of Ted Williams, vice-president of corporate affairs for Casino Rama and past chair of the implementation team. He has served as manager of administration of Rama and was chief from 1986 to 1988, after serving four years on council.

A daughter paid Mrs Williams the highest possible tribute when she said, "All of the family has achieved a lot because of mother." She described her mother as a woman who encouraged her children and pushed them to educate and improve themselves. Mrs Williams's reward is a close-knit family helping with the growth and planning of their community while preserving their proud heritage. Mrs Williams is an honoured woman, and I offer my condolences to her family and community.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Ministry statements? Seeing none —

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): "Seeing no ministers"; is that what you mean?

The Speaker: No, I don't see any ministry statements.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Mr Clem Campbell, MLA, and Mr Lawrence Springborg, MLA, from the Queensland Parliament in Australia. Welcome. I don't think their winter is as harsh as ours, though.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Speaker, I have questions for the Premier. It is my understanding that he will be in attendance today.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Stand it down?

Mr McGuinty: I would stand it down.

The Speaker: Second question? Both of them for the Premier?

Mr McGuinty: Both to the Premier.

The Speaker: Third party?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): We have questions for the Premier.

The Speaker: Stand down both of them? Third question for the Liberal Party? Who? Minister of Labour. Okay, let's go to the third —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Yes, you're right. We can't stand down third questions; you can only stand down the leadoffs.

Apparently, just from hearing you, something's happening behind me. Leader of the official opposition.

1350

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, I have a list of eight names which I'm going to read to you now: Jeff Slater, Louis Veilleux, Paul Sutherland, Lynn Beyak, Dan Callaghan, Richard Zanibbi, Blaine Tyndall and Evelyn Dodds. I was wondering if you could tell me: What two things do all of these people have in common?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know who's flipping the letters over as we play these games, but the names sound to me like very talented Ontarians, those that I recognize. They are in the very significant minority of the thousands of people we've appointed from all stripes and from all parties across the province, and I believe they were Common Sense candidates in the last election as well as the tremendous contribution they've made to their communities in a whole host of other areas. But if you have other information, I'd be happy to have it.

Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure if the Premier was answering the way I expected him to or not, but what these people have in common, of course, is that they all ran for the Premier in the last provincial election as members of the Conservative Party and, secondly, they were all beneficiaries of government appointments. Apparently over there, even if you lose, you still win: You get an appointment.

I was just wondering, is it purely coincidence that eight of your candidates happen to have received government appointments?

Hon Mr Harris: We've made about 3,000 appointments since we came to office. Of those, 1,250 or 41% were reappointments of people who were initially appointed by the NDP and the Liberals. I would think that, as did the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, we look for quality and we look for recommendations of particular ministries, or agencies, boards and commissions themselves. For example, in the case of university boards of governors, to date I think every single appointment has been recommended by the institutions themselves. If you have other names of people you think would be good, we welcome that input and follow that process.

Mr McGuinty: What the Premier is doing, of course, is not illegal, but it goes to values, it goes to ethics and it goes to standards. It's perfectly clear that this is how this government is doing business. I thought this was the politics of days long past. I don't believe people accept patronage any longer. I wish these names were the only ones. These, by the way, were the produce of a cursory examination of recent appointments.

We've also raised in this Legislature the issue of members of your staff leaving for lucrative government consulting contracts. We've raised with you issues connected with your privatization scheme and the fact that your employees are leaving to work for the company to which they ended up giving the contract.

Premier, tell me that all that is perfectly acceptable to you, that you see nothing whatsoever wrong with it and that as far as you're concerned, if you want to get a job in your job-creation scheme, you've got to be a Tory.

Hon Mr Harris: Of course nothing could be sillier, nor do I believe it was the case when your party was in power, nor when the New Democratic Party was in power. About 45% of Ontarians voted for our party in the last election. I am shocked you can only find eight out of 3,000 we appointed.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): New question.

Mr McGuinty: Give us time, Premier, we'll get you some more.

HOSPITAL FINANCING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, I want to raise with you something I am sure you are aware of that took place in your absence. The Minister of Health, a short while ago, indicated that the death of a man who died in the Civic Hospital in Peterborough on a stretcher while unattended was the subject of some kind of grand conspiracy in which the doctors, nurses, other staff, patients and even the family of this man were somehow involved in order to discredit this government. You should know that the people of Peterborough are outraged by this and that the family and the staff are hurt. Your minister has refused to apologize for his statement. Do you support him in that matter?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I am sure the Minister of Health can respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I say to the honourable member that I have made no comment with

respect to the death of that patient. It's not my place to do so. What I did comment on was an entirely separate incident that appeared on all our media stations. I have subsequently made every attempt I can to clarify my intentions with the hospital. I have faxed a letter of apology to both hospital boards in Peterborough.

I want to make it clear that since that time — this was back in February — a lot has happened. There has been a change in some management. There has been an investigator who found the atmosphere at the Civic Hospital to be very cooperative with his efforts. Dr Smith, the investigator, the dean of medicine at Queen's, has made a report to this government, a report to the community and a report to the board about how services can improve. We are currently conducting an operational review and a clinical review of that hospital and it's a very cooperative atmosphere.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I want to raise with you another incident. This past Saturday a Sudbury man, Erkki Martikainen, 77, died while waiting for heart surgery. On Wednesday he was admitted with a heart rate down to 30 beats a minute, and he and his family were informed that he had two days to live unless he had surgery. That meant he had to have his surgery by Friday. He was twice scheduled for surgery, and twice that surgery was delayed. This gentleman died on Saturday. The family asked his doctor why it was that he couldn't have the surgery. The doctor replied to them that it was the result of cutbacks to the hospital budget.

I want you to tell me if this doctor and that family and that hospital are also part of some grand conspiracy to discredit you, or is there something else here at stake?

Hon Mr Wilson: I certainly don't appreciate, and the cardiac surgeons and nurses who have been working overtime every Saturday and Sunday for the last 14 weekends since we announced the \$35 million, a record amount of money for cardiac care in this province, to get us the lowest waiting lists in the history of waiting lists in the province by this time next year, would not appreciate the implications in that question.

Second, I would say that cardiac surgeries, all cardiac programs, have been fully protected by this government. Not one penny has been cut by any hospital or any facility in this province since we've been in government. We put \$8 million in last year, new dollars, a record \$35 million this year. My condolences to the family, but it's exactly because of the status quo that we've been making an investment to try to get those waiting lists down, because it's immoral and unethical to have the length of waiting lists we have when we spend 20% more per patient in this province than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Final supplementary.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Instead of bringing her husband and their father home today, Mrs Martikainen and the Martikainen family buried her husband and their father. The doctor, the surgeon, said it was because there weren't enough resources. Minister, would you please commit to this House today that you will investigate the reasons for Mr Martikainen's death? And will you further commit to this House that if you find

that the surgeon was correct, that there aren't enough resources for heart surgery, will you ensure that there are enough resources in Sudbury and all over Ontario so that no one in this province has to experience the pain and sorrow needlessly that the Martikainen family is experiencing today?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again my condolences, on behalf of all members, to the family. I know it's not an easy situation. But the best I can say, for what comfort it brings, is that we are investing a record amount of money, unlike any previous government, in precisely the area that would concern this family, cardiac care, and that everybody is working very hard; 80% of that \$35 million goes into overtime for nurses. We are pushing the capacity of the system to its utmost human limit. In fact, we have some complaints from cardiac surgeons saying they're going to experience burnout at the rate they're working.

All of us need to understand the pressures in the system and all of us need to work together. The commitment of this government is to get those waiting lists down to an all-time low and then to keep them down so that we don't have to keep giving condolences in this House.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Premier, I want to read you a quote from today's Toronto Star. It says, "Nobody has complained in this province that this government is going too slowly." Think about it. People see the ugly mess your government has left behind at the family support plan because you tried to ram through your cuts. People see the clumsy cuts to hospitals and health care, and as a result we see people being left behind in the health care system. People remember your hasty Bill 26 omnibus legislation, when your own parliamentary assistants couldn't answer the questions: What is this amendment about? What is this legislation about? What is it supposed to do? Then people saw you try to ram through your megacity legislation.

Premier, can you tell us who in Ontario, in your mind, is complaining that your government is moving too slowly in ramming through your controversial legislation?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): There are an extraordinarily high number of people who are unemployed in this province. There are still far too many people who are dependent upon welfare in this province, able-bodied people who want to work.

Given that our program is one to improve the climate for private sector job creation, one that already is having some initial success rate of two thirds of all the jobs across Canada being created here in Ontario, 1,000 net new jobs a day, I want to say this: As good as the results are relative to all other provinces, and in fact leading North America right now, they're not good enough. One person who wants to work out of work, one person dependent upon welfare who wants to break the cycle of dependency: That is the reason why we are moving quickly to ensure they can have the opportunities they should have in this province of Ontario.

1400

Mr Hampton: I think what I heard is the Premier wants to ram through his legislation so that he can lay off more staff at the family support plan, can lay off more than 11,000 nurses and health care workers a year, can lay off more people in the education sector, can put more people out of work in the municipal sector. I think that's what I heard the Premier say.

Premier, we've looked at your new rules and what your new rules amount to is this —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: What your new rules amount to is this: You're attempting to shut the public out of the democratic process. You want to change the rules here so that you can introduce legislation and ram it through this House before the public even knows what it's about, never mind has a chance to respond to it. Can you tell us why it's so urgent for you to shut the public out of the democratic process? Can you tell us that?

Hon Mr Harris: Precisely because you don't listen very well is why you are now, as a result of the 1995 election — you didn't hear what people had to say to you then and you do not listen very well today. What you think you are hearing is not at all what we are saying or what we are doing. In fact, the changes we are making are restoring hope and opportunity and prosperity to our most vulnerable. I might add that the changes we have proposed to make to those who are currently labelled disabled and put on the welfare system have been applauded by advocates of the disabled community as something that was long overdue. These are the kinds of changes we would like to be able to proceed with.

I want to say this: There is absolutely nothing in the rule changes that says anything other than we want the broadest consultation, we want the most public hearings, we want to carry out hearing from the public, but yes, we would like to bring our rules into line with, for example —

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Interjections.

The Speaker: To the member for Ottawa-Rideau, I'm doing my best to get some order. Thank you for your assistance. Final supplementary, member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Despite the Premier's rhetoric, the fact is that as the rules are proposed in the motion introduced yesterday, it would have been possible for this government under those rules to have introduced the megacity legislation on a Monday and have had it passed before the end of the week — controversial legislation like that.

Doesn't the Premier understand that if you ram through legislation in that kind of rush there can be serious flaws in it that could have been identified if the public had a chance to examine it properly and respond? But you want to shut the public out. Why is it you're trying to shut the public out of the legislative process? Why don't you want to have real, broad consultation around controversial pieces of legislation to ensure that the legislation does exactly what even you intend it to do, rather than bring about errors that can cause real problems for our society?

Hon Mr Harris: The record of this government will show vis-à-vis any other government we've had more hearings, more consultations on legislation than did the New Democratic Party or the Liberal Party. I would say to you, it is our intention to try and use the very valuable time of this Legislature and its committees to hear from people, to hear concerns, as opposed to 12,500 computer-generated amendments or the Alvin Curling fiasco in this Legislature. We want real, meaningful debate and consultations.

Interjections.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): They are out of order again.

The Speaker: I ask the member for Ottawa-Rideau to come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, you have to withdraw that comment, by the way.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I withdraw it.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I have a question to the Premier. I would say to the Premier, you describe democratic accountability, when you're finally held accountable in this House, as a fiasco. I think that accurately reflects your view of democracy.

CHILD CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Last week the Minister of Community and Social Services said that for sole-support parents who require day care assistance in order to participate in Ontario Works, assistance will indeed be there for them, as it is currently. She tried to pass that off as somehow being hopeful. The reality is that right now, for example in Metro Toronto, on the waiting list for subsidized child care there are 8,500 children whose parents receive social assistance. Many of them would be forced to participate in Ontario Works. There are no child care spaces for them as the situation is currently.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Question, please.

Mr Hampton: Premier, how do you expect to meet the demand for subsidized child care when Ontario Works is mandatory for single parents, considering your government hasn't created a new space —

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the minister would be pleased to respond.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Community and Social Services): There's no question that there are waiting lists for subsidies in certain communities across this province. That's one of the reasons we made the regulation change in how we calculate the funding. It gave Metro Toronto a \$14-million windfall, which they could have chosen to use to try and bring down that subsidy list.

We also know at the end of every year — it was a problem the NDP experienced when they were in government — unfortunately sometimes municipalities have not been able to pick up their 20 cents when we've had 80

cents on the table to help someone who needs child care. That's why we're changing the system to work with municipalities to make it a mandatory service for them, because we recognize that child care support for parents, especially a sole-support parent, can make the difference between getting them off welfare or having them stay in a job. It's a very important support.

Mr Hampton: We were part of a government that recognized that if you want to help people get off social assistance, you have to ensure that those child care spaces are there. Listen to what this government has said it has done, but in fact what it has done. The minister said last week that the government has set aside \$30 million for Ontario Works child care. That works out to \$191 a year for each child who will be affected by the mandatory workfare for single parents. That's about \$3 a week.

There's one of two things going on here. Either you don't believe your own press, you realize what your critics are saying is true, that you won't be able to place all the people who are going to be required to participate in Ontario Works, or you are going to force parents to send their children to unregulated, bargain-basement child care. You aren't putting forward the money to do it, so what's it going to be, Minister? Either your own press is wrong or you're going to force people into unregulated child care. Which is it?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If the honourable member would pay attention to what this government is saying, he would know that he is in error in what he is trying to claim. First of all, there are more licensed child care spaces today than there were in 1995. There is more spending available for child care today than there was in 1995. We spend more money on child care per capita in this province than any other province.

Finally, if the honourable member's government had been so concerned about increasing the number of child care spaces, perhaps they would not have wasted \$52 million trying to convert private sector day care to non-profit day care. That was a wonderful expenditure for ideological purposes. It did not result in new spaces or new subsidies for parents that desperately need them.

1410

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Minister, in the answer you just gave there were some things that were not factual, and I would like to explore that with you at another time. What I want to talk to you about right now are the children who are going to be affected by your decision to force parents to participate in workfare and not provide the support for child care spaces.

There are now 128,000 licensed child care spaces in Ontario. To accommodate the children affected by your workfare announcement, the number of spaces would have to double. Municipalities don't have the money to do that. You're saying it's mandatory but they don't have the money. These children are already the children most at risk, living in poverty. Municipalities at best can only give them some minor help towards unregulated basement care, that kind of babysitting where you don't have the support and wellbeing and health and safety regulations in place to ensure that kids are secure.

The Speaker: Question, please.

Ms Lankin: Minister, what I want from you today is a guarantee that every child of every parent whom you are forcing to participate in workfare will be guaranteed a —

The Speaker: Thank you, member for Beaches-Woodbine.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, I think the honourable member would agree with me that most of the sole-support parents on welfare whom I've talked to don't want to be on welfare. They recognize that it is much better for themselves and their children if they're in a paid job. That's why we are putting in place the program, so those individuals will have the opportunity, as singles currently do now, to get off welfare, because they shouldn't be there; they don't want to be there; we know it's better for their families.

Second, we have been very clear that sole-support parents with school-age children will be under Ontario Works. For those with preschool children, it is not mandatory. Third, we have additional spending we are putting forward for child care support: an additional \$30 million. Also, just to refresh the honourable member's memory, in 1995 there were approximately 128,000 spaces; there are now 137,000 spaces. The last time I checked, that is an increase.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday I'm sure you experienced a very uncomfortable time when hundreds of injured workers gathered outside the committee room when we started our hearings on Bill 99. We witnessed the frustration and the concerns of injured workers because of the proposals you have in your bill that affect them the most. They're angry, they're concerned because they feel this is an attack on the benefits they have at the moment.

They've asked for a meeting with you as a group. You have continually said that you would not meet with them as a group. I might remind you that you are the first Minister of Labour in over 30 years not to have met with them as a group. Would you do the right thing and meet with them?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I just remind the member that for many years injured workers, as well as employers, have been very concerned about the state of the WCB. In fact, yesterday we saw approximately 200 injured workers, and if we go back to when your government was in power, in 1989 when you introduced Bill 162, the injured workers stormed the Legislature to protest your bill.

This has been an ongoing concern. In fact, when I was in opposition I met with injured workers. I know how concerned they are. I have indicated to the injured workers that I would meet with them. I have said that at any time my door is open and I'm quite prepared to meet with those individuals.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): They have to kick in the door to open it.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Lake Nipigon, please come to order. Supplementary.

Mr Patten: That's not what Mr Biggin was saying yesterday. He's the executive director of the Union of

Injured Workers of Ontario, as the minister knows. He said, "Why people are so angry today is because you," referring to you, Minister, "have refused on numerous occasions — on two different occasions in Toronto, we brought petitions to your office and requested meetings and we were told by your staff that only a majority of up to three people would be allowed to meet with you."

They're saying they don't want their representatives to meet with you, they want to meet with you themselves. These are the human beings who are most affected by this legislation. They want to tell you their stories. They want to tell you how they're doing. They want to tell you the benefits they receive and how they're trying to cope with that.

Sometimes it takes a strong character to say, "I'm going to back down on this and I'm going to meet with them." Will you do the human thing and will you meet with them? They also invited the committee to meet and I'd be very happy to join you, as I'm sure the other members would as well. They promised that they would have an orderly and disciplined meeting. Will you please meet with them?

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the member opposite, I just would remind you one more time that for two years we have made opportunities available to injured workers. In fact, if they had met with us on a regular basis, by now we could have heard from a few hundred injured workers. On each and every instance that they were at the Ministry of Labour door we indicated we obviously couldn't meet with the entire mob gathered outside. Obviously we could only meet with three of them. We simply can't accommodate each and every individual, but we're certainly very happy to meet with them in groups of one, in groups of two, in groups of three, just as we meet with any other groups of individuals.

The Speaker: New question, third party, member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the same minister on exactly the same issue. Minister, don't you understand how insulting it is for you to refer to the injured workers who were here yesterday as a mob? They were in wheelchairs, on crutches, with neck braces. These are injured workers.

You talk about the fact there were 200 here. The fact is, we had to spread them out over three rooms because we couldn't fit them all into one small committee room. In fact, the only reason you stayed all the way through was you couldn't get out the door because there were so many injured workers.

You owe it to those injured workers to have a proper, open meeting. We just heard your Premier talk about the fact that he wants to have the public involved and he wants to let people talk to his government. If that's the case, you have an obligation today to say that you will hold a public meeting that allows all the injured workers to be there and talk to you face to face. Commit to that today, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd just like to remind the member that when your government was in office you had an opportunity to improve the lot of the injured workers. However, they were not happy with your reforms. I would just remind you this article says, "WCB Error Rate

Under Fire; Injured Workers Protest at Office of Christopherson."

Interjections.

The Speaker: You clearly caught a lot of people by surprise on that one.

1420

Mr Christopherson: If that's your answer, my response to you is: I met with them. I met with them, and so did my Premier and my Minister of Labour and every other caucus member they wanted to talk to. In fact, we improved the lot of 45,000 injured workers by up to \$200 a month. You're taking \$6 billion out of their pockets and giving it to your corporate pals, and you won't meet with them. It's a disgrace that you would ram that bill through: four days in Toronto, four afternoons, six days out in the province. That's not sufficient, Minister. When we asked for unanimous consent to extend the hearings and to hold a large public meeting to allow the injured workers to be there, your backbenchers killed it. Your government backbenchers, under your direction, killed that request.

Minister, you owe it to those injured workers to meet with them. They're not asking for the world. They just want to tell you face to face what they're going through. Show us that you care. Show us that you'll listen. Commit today to meet with them.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would just like to remind the member opposite that you had five years to correct the WCB. I also want to remind you that in 1994, injured workers in this province stormed the Legislature, reaching the doors of the chamber, to protest the NDP's Bill 165. Why didn't you get the system right?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton Centre, I appreciate it's a very emotional issue. Sudbury East, would you come to order, please.

Mr Pouliot: The paper says it's repugnant and —

The Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, please come to order. Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: For five years, you had the opportunity to make changes. Unfortunately, you did not give them a seat at the table of the board of directors, as they asked for five years. You took \$18 billion out of the pensions of injured workers.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Witmer: This is what the injured workers say: "Injured workers do not have the opportunity to negotiate. We have to take what we get, and what we get out of these amendments does not help us." Vince Bellerba.

Injured workers did not like your changes, and we're going to make the system better. We're going to focus on prevention.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Labour. Hamilton Centre, I warn you to come to order. Beaches-Woodbine as well.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): My question is for the Solicitor General. We currently have

about 12 sites for the victim crisis assistance and referral service program in Ontario, sometimes referred to as VCARS. This program is being expanded and I am pleased to say that the district of Muskoka has been named as one of the eight new locations.

Can you comment on how this program will lead to better coordinated victims' services in the district of Muskoka?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Last June our government made a commitment to rebalance the justice system in favour of victims rather than criminals. Expanding the victim crisis assistance and referral service program from 12 sites to 20 sites, including the new site in Muskoka, reflects our commitment to enhancing the role of victims in the justice system.

This announcement will mean, for example, that victims of sexual assault, domestic assault, accidents or property crimes in Muskoka will have access to immediate, short-term crisis services and can be referred directly to other local services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Because this program uses volunteers, it will free up police officers to continue to focus on front-line policing.

Mr Grimmett: That certainly will be welcome news in the district of Muskoka. I'd like to ask you how soon a system will be up and running in the district of Muskoka and what steps will occur between now and then.

Hon Mr Runciman: We announced the funding of the eight new VCARS sites last week on June 11. I understand the Muskoka site will receive over \$100,000 in annual funding from the victims' justice fund, and I want to stress that this money will be used to support immediate assistance to victims of crime in the Muskoka area. I'm informed that in the near future the local board of directors will be hiring staff, recruiting volunteers and making sure these volunteers are trained in accordance with ministry standards.

It's our hope that the Muskoka VCARS site will be open and serving victims of crime within the next six months.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My question is for the leader of the government, the Premier. At a time when even the people who agree with your policies believe you are moving too quickly and far too recklessly and not looking at the consequences of your action, when those who have been victims of the bullying and mean-spirited policies of your government believe that your radical revolution is causing irreparable damage to the social fabric of our province, you are attempting to impose drastic procedural changes that will allow you to impose your personal will and that of the backroom boys who advise you, unelected people, I might add, in your office, on this assembly.

Premier, you have an overwhelming majority in this House. You can pass any bill or any motion you wish with that overwhelming majority. Why are you trying to impose undemocratic rules that will amount to a virtual dictatorship in this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the House leader can respond.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Government House Leader): First of all, in terms of the doom-and-gloom introduction from the House leader for the opposition, indeed the economic forecast for Ontario is excellent. There have been over 1,000 jobs a day created in Ontario over the last three months. There are many good things happening in the province, and I would encourage the opposition to share my trust in its future.

The House leader for the Liberal Party will remember in 1989 that party brought forward changes to the House procedures; in 1992 the NDP brought forward House changes. We are bringing forward House changes to assist the members of this House in being involved in this process to make the process run more effectively and efficiently and to better serve the people of Ontario.

Mr Bradley: Let me share with the Premier, the person who is really responsible for these rule changes, the person who wants to impose his will on this province and to just shove aside any opposition to him, the words of Ernie Eves in opposition. Here are his words:

"I think one has to understand that the only way opposition — not just opposition members but any public opposition to any proposed piece of legislation — can be effectively dealt with or talked about under our system of government, under the parliamentary system of government, is through the opposition parties' ability to debate, and yes, on occasion even stall or slow down progress of a particular bill, and that has worked very effectively over the years against governments of all political stripes."

Norm Sterling said: "Over the past six years in opposition I have been successful in forcing the government of the day to accept some amendments to their legislation. My only tool was to delay or to threaten to delay. What sense is there for me to bother to debate if I have no means to make them listen?"

Why don't you listen to Ernie Eves, why don't you listen to Norm Sterling, and why don't you abandon the draconian rule changes that are only to be imposed to crush the opposition in this House?

Hon David Johnson: I believe these changes actually accomplish what Ernie Eves has indicated. The first point I'd like to make is that I have made it clear I would like to get together with the House leaders from the other two parties and negotiate. If there are aspects —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for St Catharines, come to order. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The second point I'd like to make is that many of these rules have been taken from the federal Legislature. They encourage the members —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon David Johnson: I believe that these rules, which are negotiable, will allow more members of this House to be involved in the debate, will allow for the House to have extended hours for more debating time — yes, in the evening.

Finally, I believe these changes will allow this House to run more effectively, in a more efficient fashion and to serve the people of Ontario better. My plea to the opposition parties, if there are some aspects they don't like —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Hon David Johnson: Just to wrap up, finally, let's sit down and talk about this if there are some problems you have. I'm confident all three parties can get together and resolve this and come forward with a package we would all be proud of.

1430

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources concerning the firefighting that's going on in northeastern Ontario. The firefighters are doing their best but they are actually being hindered by some of the policies of his government, and I'd like to use a specific example.

Last year you closed the Gogama fire base to save money, but basically you closed it in name only because both last year and this year, for the entire fire season, there has been a helicopter stationed in Gogama, MNR has brought back all the equipment, and there's a trailer onsite with personnel. Many times this year, the permanent Gogama firefighting crew, which is now stationed near Timmins, has driven to Timmins in the morning to pick up their MNR vehicles and equipment, driven them back to Gogama to remain on standby, and then in the evening they take the equipment back to Timmins and the whole thing is repeated the next day. This is a waste of time, resources and money.

Will you now admit that closing the Gogama fire base was a mistake and that you will reopen it?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I guess the member of the third party would recall when we announced that we were closing 17 of 45 bases it was to rationalize the fire operations so they wouldn't have to have equipment and people stationed in outposts and get food to them when there might not be a fire. At that time, I also assured the members that a lot of these bases would still be there. If we needed them, we'd use them; if there was a high risk, some of those bases would become operational. In other places we would set up initial attack bases that are close to the fire.

Today's technologies allow us to predict a lot better than we used to. In the old days that maybe the member of the third party wants to go back to, you had members of the fire team sitting in a tower all day. Those days are long gone. The efficiencies overall allow us to use those bases like Gogama. That's proof that it's working.

Mr Laughren: The people who fight fires in the Gogama area and all of northeastern Ontario know a lot more about it than you do. I can tell you that your ministry is a laughingstock in that part of the province because of the way you're dealing with it. It really has become a joke. Gogama is part of a very valuable timber base and they are very vulnerable if there's no fire base there. There's no guarantee that there will be a crew in

that area if there's firefighting going on elsewhere. This really is ridiculous.

Will you at least make a commitment, since you seem so committed to what you've done, to come to Gogama, have a public meeting and explain to the people in that area exactly what you're doing and why you're doing it? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Hodgson: To answer your question, we can have someone from MNR go up and explain it to the people in Gogama, if you'd like. What the member of the third party is forgetting, and he seems to think it's not working, is that our firefighters are the best in the world. They're recognized as having the best program in the world.

The changes we've made in the last two years to restore that department to the world prominence it had before are remarkable. The conversion of our air fleet is recognized as a great achievement; the reorganization of our crews and the use of high technology to predict and fight initial attack are laudable. We've also taken advantage of private trainers to get more mop-up crews to free up initial attack crews so they can do what they're best at: initial attack and saving lives and saving property values.

Any time I go up to northern Ontario, people commend us on the valiant work the MNR is doing today, unlike the changes that took place in 1992 that just decimated the morale of the squad.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is to the Minister of Labour and it concerns Bill 99, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Many of my constituents would like to know why the government is taking action in this bill to clarify that workplace mental stress is not a compensable claim in the workers' compensation system. Could the minister explain to my constituents in Oshawa why this action is being taken?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would just like to indicate that we are not making any changes to current WCB practice or policy as far as compensation for workplace mental stress is concerned. What we are attempting to do in the legislation is to clarify exactly what stress will be compensated. There actually was a study conducted in 1992 by the NDP, but they were unable to arrive at a definition, so what we have attempted to do in our legislation is to ensure that all individuals know when they will or will not be compensated for stress in the workplace. We have clearly defined it and clarified it for each and every person.

Mr Ouellette: Given what the minister has just said, could she please outline for my constituents what type of stress claims will continue to be compensable under Ontario's workers' compensation system as a result of the changes contained in Bill 99.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I just want to indicate that we are doing what has been done in Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. We are emphasizing that any traumatic event that occurs in the workplace will continue to be compensable.

Also, I've had several questions asked about sexual harassment. Again, there is absolutely no change in that policy. That will continue to be compensable in the future as it has been in the past.

1440

ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Environment. Last week during questioning on the Hydro coverup that has occurred over a number of years, you continued to hide under the Environmental Bill of Rights and state that you're following the process outlined in the Environmental Bill of Rights in regard to an investigation. Subsection 27(4) of the Environmental Bill of Rights states that the Minister of Environment "shall include a regulatory impact statement" when a new regulation is posted on the environmental registry.

Minister, can you explain to the House why on 28 occasions this has not occurred and on those 28 occasions your ministry, or you as minister, has breached the Environmental Bill of Rights?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): Actually it's not a breach, it's an optional thing. The Minister of Environment has the right to include with a posting a compendium or additional information. Often with regard to the postings we include additional information which in a lot of ways takes the same function as a compendium or an additional piece of information might.

In fact, since the EBR was first instituted by the last government, there hasn't been a record of two separate documents. I'm told by my ministry officials that what has happened is that the postings include not only what is required as to the change in regulations per se, but often explanation around it, which in our view gives the same kind of credence as was required in terms of what the formal section says.

Mr Agostino: We were informed by the office of the Environmental Commissioner that as of May 28, with regulations brought in by your ministry, there was not one regulatory impact statement submitted, and we're not talking about minor changes. You have an out in this: It says "if the minister considers that it is necessary...to permit more informed public consultation on the proposal."

The proposals we're talking about were not minor: removal of the ban on municipal waste incinerators; changes to waste management planning; expansion of waste disposal sites; changes to the development of the Niagara Escarpment; changes to mining, chemical and paper effluent levels. Those are the regulations you brought in and you failed on every single occasion to follow the Environmental Bill of Rights that you are responsible for.

It's one of two things: Either you have breached the bill as minister or you do not believe there should be further public consultation and discussion. Which is it, Minister? Have you broken the bill or do you not believe the public should have input into these massive changes you're making?

Hon Mr Sterling: The truth is that we are following the law. We are filing information. We are sometimes criticized, quite frankly, for filing too much information for the public to be able to read all the information and follow it.

We are following, in effect, an impact statement within the body and the context of what we are filing. We believe we are following the laws as they are put. We have in fact been congratulated by the Environmental Commissioner for our use of the registry. If you want to read the last environmental report, she was very complimentary to my ministry in terms of the use of the registry.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development. In the last two years, your government has shut down all the fire attack bases in northern Ontario and has eliminated more than 2,000 jobs within the Ministry of Natural Resources. One of the consequences of these drastic cuts is that firefighters who used to take the mandatory pre-fit course previously offered by MNR now have to turn to the private sector to get it, which means that if the private sector provider decides it is not economically feasible to give the test, they just cancel it. This is exactly what has been happening over the last couple of months. In the last two months, the one-day pre-fit course has been cancelled three times in my particular area.

Minister, when are you going to make sure that the course is offered locally within a reasonable distance to provide local jobs, but also to protect and fight the fires in these communities?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member of the third party for the question. I just want to correct him. In his preamble he talked about attack bases. As he's fully well aware, 17 out of 45 attack bases were closed, not all the ones in northern Ontario that they like to repeat ad nauseam.

There are 166 initial attack crews in Ontario. What we've done is to allow more people, particularly in northern Ontario, the opportunity to earn employment by fighting fires. We've asked them to pay for training to be involved in sustained attack and mop-up. The initial attack crews are still 166 and they're freed up to do what they're best at doing — initial attack.

Mr Len Wood: You're eliminating more jobs all the time within MNR. As I've said before, you've cancelled the courses three times in the last couple of months. You're asking people to travel 400 or 500 miles at their own expense to get this one-day course and the examination. As a result, during the recent forest fires that have been raging throughout Timmins and the Cochrane area, a lot of people are unemployed as you're bringing in people from British Columbia, Manitoba, all over the place, to fight the fires. Our people are unemployed, waiting for you to make that test available in the area. When are you going to do your job and make this test available in the area?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'll look into the details on why the course hasn't been offered in your area. We con-

tracted out the training to a number of private sector people who bid on it, among them first nations, local deliverers, people who were qualified to give the training. This was done in an effort to try to hire more people from Ontario. If you check your facts, you'll see that the opportunity for northern Ontario people to be involved in sustained attack and mop-up in firefighting has increased this year. That's an opportunity for employment in northern Ontario. That's an improvement over the way the MNR used to work. I would like to thank the member for the question. I'll look into the training in his area.

CLEAN AIR COMMUTE

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is for the Minister of Environment. I just received word that you were seen this morning on Yonge Street. You were riding in a rickshaw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Order. I know we all want to hear the end of this question. I just need some order so I can hear it.

Mr Barrett: I understand this rickshaw was pedalled by a very tall blond. Could you please tell the House just what was going on this morning?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Environment and Energy): I think the member was referring to the fact that this morning I was involved with a celebration dealing with Clean Air Commute. It's a program put on by Pollution Probe to try to encourage people to take alternative transportation to work in order to keep our air clean.

The person driving the rickshaw was Curt Harnett, who happens to be the Canadian cycling superstar.

We were celebrating with Sunoco Inc some of the pollution prevention efforts they have undertaken in the last five years. We gave them a pollution prevention award. They were very interested in what the ministry is doing with regard to air quality control.

As you know, we are doing many things in this province, including revising our air quality standards. We are bringing forward PM10 standards. We are doing a number of things.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise on a point of order in reaction to the statement made earlier in question period by the government House leader. If the government House leader is serious about wanting to have true discussions and negotiations around standing order changes, will the House agree to unanimous consent to have the motion removed from the order paper for today in advance of such discussion?

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Member for Algoma, I just need to be clear on what you're seeking unanimous consent for.

Mr Wildman: To have the motion that is on the order paper removed from the order paper for today.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to have the motion appearing on the order paper today —

Interjections.

The Speaker: You've got to wait, please — to be removed until a later date? Agreed?

Interjections.

The Speaker: I did hear a no.

1450

PETITIONS

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to stop the Harris government's plan to kill debate in the Legislature.

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of the people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to reject these proposed draconian rule changes and retain rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I agree with this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions signed by workers from various communities across the province:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas workers' health and safety must be protected in the province of Ontario, especially the right to refuse work which is likely to endanger a worker, the right to know about workplace hazards and the right to participate in joint health and safety committees; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations help protect workers' health and safety and workers' rights in this area; and

"Whereas the government's discussion paper Review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act threatens

workers' health and safety by proposing to deregulate the existing act and regulations to reduce or eliminate workers' health and safety rights and to reduce enforcement of health and safety laws by the Ministry of Labour; and

"Whereas workers must have a full opportunity to be heard about this proposed drastic erosion in their present protections from injuries and occupational diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to oppose any attempt to erode the present provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. Further we, the undersigned, demand that public hearings on the discussion paper be held in at least 20 communities throughout Ontario."

I add my name to theirs in support.

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have further petitions from my riding concerning health care as well as additional signatures from Dunnville, Cayuga, Caledonia and Lowbanks. It is entitled "Stand Up for Rural Health Care."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is urgent concern about the future of community hospitals located in Dunnville, Hagersville, Simcoe and Tillsonburg; and

"Whereas distance, weather and doctor shortages are serious barriers to people in rural areas accessing emergency services and health care; and

"Whereas local communities have worked for years to establish, maintain, improve and modernize hospital, physician and other health services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt a rural health policy to deal with these problems and to protect the health care rights of rural communities; and that hospital boards, district health councils, and the Health Services Restructuring Commission and the government of Ontario adhere to this rural policy."

I signed these petitions.

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no dialysis treatment currently available in the Cornwall area; and

"Whereas the lack of local medical treatment forces dialysis patients throughout Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and beyond to drive to Ottawa and Kingston several times a week, even during dangerous weather driving conditions, to receive the basic medical attention, incurring unnecessary stress, cost and inconvenience; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health promised on April 24, 1996, to rectify this medical shortfall by establishing a dialysis treatment facility in Cornwall; and

"Whereas the promise made by the Minister of Health has to date not been kept, resulting in local patients and their families and friends travelling to Ottawa and Kingston several times a week during the abovenoted conditions;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly and the Minister of Health to follow through on their commitment made last April to set up the long-awaited and much-needed health services for Cornwall area residents."

I also signed that petition.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS CENTRES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This petition reads: "To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas sexual assault is a crime and the effects of abuse last a lifetime for the survivors of these crimes;

"Whereas sexual assault crisis centres provide community-based, women-positive, cost-effective services which recognize and respond to both recent, historical and childhood sexual assaults, offering short-term crisis intervention, longer-term therapy, public education, prevention, court and police support;

"Whereas hospital-based treatment centres are mandated primarily to work with survivors of recent sexual assaults with a medical forensic approach, offering only short-term counselling and referrals, while adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse or historical assaults need longer-term services to recover from the horrendous crimes they have suffered;

"Whereas if Parliament decides to close sexual assault crisis centres and redistribute drastically reduced funds to treatment centres, most adult survivors of sexual assault will not have the services they need to heal and will be further victimized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to maintain community-based sexual assault crisis centres."

I affix my signature to this petition.

WATER CHLORINATION

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the chemical substance chlorine was added to the people of Milton's pure well water supply in 1995;

"Whereas the Halton region water delivery system in the town of Milton has received the regular maintenance and standard upgrade requirements outlined by the province and is supported by a standby chlorination unit sufficient enough to prevent the spread of a serious bacterial threat;

"Whereas recent studies on the use of chlorine additives in drinking water have raised the spectre of chlorine as a possible cancer agent; and

"Whereas the people of the town of Milton overwhelmingly supported the belief that a standby chlorination requirement is sufficient enough to prevent the spread of a serious bacterial threat;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that the Ontario government grant the people of Milton's request for a variance allowing only standby chlorination to be used in treating the pure well waters supplying Milton's water delivery system."

I'm pleased to add my name to this petition.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS AUX HÔPITAUX

M. Gilles E. Morin (Carleton Est): «À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

«Attendu que la recommandation de la Commission de la restructuration des soins de santé en Ontario ordonne la fermeture de l'hôpital Montfort et que cette décision constitue le rejet de la volonté de l'entière communauté francophone de la province et de la communauté de l'est ;

«Attendu que 40 % des francophones de la province de l'Ontario résident dans l'aire de service de l'hôpital Montfort, soit l'est de l'Ontario, où la population connaît un des plus hauts taux de croissance de toute la province, que le comté de Russell n'a pas d'hôpital et qu'en plus, Montfort dessert le nord de l'Ontario, où le nombre de francophones est très élevé ;

«Attendu que la fermeture de Montfort éloigne et diminue grandement l'accessibilité à une salle d'urgences pour plus de 150 000 personnes ;

«Attendu que Montfort est le seul hôpital d'enseignement et de formation des professionnels de la santé en français en Ontario et que la fermeture du seul hôpital spécialisé offrant une gamme complète de services en français mènera à la dilution et, éventuellement, à la disparition des services de santé en français en Ontario ;

«Attendu que l'on fait disparaître l'hôpital qui a un des meilleurs rendements de la province et qui, pour fins de comparaison, constitue l'exemple de choix du ministère de la Santé ;

«Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

«Nous demandons que le premier ministre de la province intervienne fermement auprès de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé de l'Ontario afin que soit préservé l'emplacement actuel de l'hôpital et que soient consolidés la vocation, le mandat et le rôle essentiel que joue Montfort auprès de sa communauté.»

J'affirme avec ma signature.

1500

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): A petition regarding the changes the government is making to workers' compensation — the attack on workers' compensation, actually.

"To the Premier and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, oppose your government's plan to dismantle the workers' compensation system, including reducing benefits; excluding claims for back injuries, carpal tunnel, muscle injuries, strains, sprains, stress and most occupational disease; eliminating pension supplements; handing over control of our claims to our employers for the first four to six weeks after injury; privatizing WCB to large insurance companies; eliminating worker representation; eliminating or restricting the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, WCAT; deducting Canada pension plan disability benefits and union pensions dollar for dollar from WCB benefits.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand fair compensation if we are injured, a safe workplace, no reduction in benefits, improved re-employment and vocational reha-

bilitation, that WCAT be left intact and that the WCB bipartite board of directors be reinstated."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

PHYSICIANS' FEES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition concerning physicians' services signed by a number of people in the towns of St Williams, Port Rowan, La Salette, Vanessa, Port Dover.

"We, the people, have decided it's time to help our doctors because in helping them we are helping ourselves, you and your family included. Our doctors have dedicated their lives to helping, healing and saving our lives. At this time it is critical to help them and there may be a time when they are unable to help us.

"The government dictates how many patients our doctors may see in a day. Then after the quota is fulfilled they must close their doors. What if we or someone in our precious family have an emergency — life or death — and are unable to see our doctor or any other doctor in this case? Are they going to suffer unnecessarily or even die? The emergency room will be so packed.

"This is the opinion of not only a select few but most of the general population. We are getting scared and desperate. We, the people, need your help. So do our doctors with their knowledge, schooling and money used to get them where they are today. In all honesty, we believe the government does not have the right to dictate to the doctors how many patients they can have and the money they can make while everyone else can make whatever they can.

"We are always so proud to be Canadians but when the government starts playing Monopoly with our health, it's time to take a stand. We are counting on you. Please help our well-educated doctors."

I sign this petition.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My petition reads like this:

"Whereas the people of Ontario want rigorous discussion on legislation dealing with public policy issues like health care, education and care for seniors; and

"Whereas many people in Ontario believe that the Mike Harris government is moving too quickly and recklessly, creating havoc with the provision of quality health care, quality education, and adversely affecting seniors; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to change the rules of the Ontario Legislature, which would allow the government to ram legislation through more quickly and have less accountability to the public and the media through exercises such as question period; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, when they were in opposition, defended the rights of the opposition and used the rules to their full advantage when they believed it was necessary to slow down the passage of controversial legislation; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government now wishes to reduce the amount of time that MPPs will have to debate the important issues of the day; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government, through its proposed rule changes, is attempting to diminish the role of elected members of the Legislative Assembly, who are accountable to the people who elect them, and instead concentrate power in the Premier's office in the hands of people who are not elected officials;

"We, the undersigned, call upon Mike Harris to reject these proposed draconian rule changes and restore rules which promote rigorous debate on contentious issues and hold the government accountable to the people of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition, with which I agree.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition signed by members of CEP.

"Whereas the Harris government has introduced legislation to amend the Workers' Compensation Act and distributed a discussion paper about changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and

"Whereas the changes include erosion of the right to refuse unsafe work; workers will be forced to apply to their employer for WCB benefits; employers will decide if the claim is valid; reduction in power of the joint health and safety committees; and elimination of compensation for certain injuries and diseases; and

"Whereas the Workers' Compensation Act is a vital protection for all workers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Occupational Health and Safety Act has prevented untold numbers of accidents and saved thousands from illness and diseases;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand full public hearings throughout the province of Ontario on the Workers' Compensation Act proposed changes" — not just the measly six days they've thrown out — "no changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, workers' right to refuse or joint health and safety committees."

I add my name to theirs.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for adoption of amendments to the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I think when we left off we were with the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Yesterday, as I began my remarks, I referred to some remarks made by the member for Parry Sound in the debate in June 1992. I would just like to remind the House of the sentiments expressed by the then third party House leader, now Minister of Finance in the Conservative government. At that time, Mr Eves said:

"I believe it is essential that we change the rules only by consensus of all three parties. Sure, any government, I suppose, that has a majority can change them unilaterally; none ever has in the province of Ontario and now none will up to this date."

Then he further said, "If any government ever did proceed unilaterally with rules changes, it would become a very acrimonious place indeed."

Mr Eves further said, "If that spirit and that element of trust is not there, I don't think it matters what the rules are, quite frankly; this place is not going to operate."

Those were comments made by a very experienced member of the Conservative caucus talking about the possibility of procedural changes, changes to the standing orders and what effects they might have if a government were to move unilaterally.

Today in the question period the government House leader made an argument that, sure, he's called the motion that will change the rules of this House, change them dramatically, make it impossible for the public to be involved in controversial issues that are brought before the House if the government wishes to ram them through, but he said these were negotiable. He indicated he would like to meet this afternoon to talk about this. However, when given the opportunity to have the matter removed from the order paper, to show the sincerity of his offer, members of the government caucus said no. They said, "No, this matter should be debated this afternoon."

As I said yesterday, this government is following the policy of Teddy Roosevelt, "Walk softly and carry a big stick." So the minister is at one point saying, "Yes, we want to talk, we want to negotiate," but he's got the big stick of this motion hanging over the heads of the members of this Legislature. I suppose there's an attempt to ensure that members of the Legislature will be cooperative with the government's agenda and will get it through quickly for fear that the government will lower that big stick and bring in changes unilaterally to the rules of this House, which won't just affect this government, won't just affect the agenda that is before us in June 1997, but will affect the way this assembly works for the future.

As Mr Eves, the member for Parry Sound, indicated, if this were to happen unilaterally, this "would become a very acrimonious place." We saw a little of that this afternoon in question period. We saw how people react, how members of this assembly react when they are being told it will be very, very difficult, if the government gets its way, for the opposition to do its job and for the public in this democracy to be involved in changes that will affect them and their communities.

1510

The government has said that these are just changes that would bring us in line with the House of Commons rules. Yesterday I made the point that the House of Commons is a very different place from this assembly. The House of Commons, for one thing, has three times as many members as this assembly does. There is a need to ensure that members in that House have the opportunity to speak in debates. I suppose you can make the argument that there should be time allocation limitations put on to ensure that 300 members have an opportunity. But here we will only have after the next election 103 members, so we don't have the same pressures.

The other difference in Ottawa is that the House of Commons is only one of two Houses in Parliament. Here we are unicameral; we only have one House; in Parlia-

ment there are two. Every matter that is brought before the Parliament in Ottawa has to go through three readings not only in the House of Commons, but also three readings in the Senate.

I am not in favour of a bicameral system; I don't think we need a second House. But if you're going to pass rules that bring us in line with the House of Commons that make it possible for this House and this government to move legislation through as quickly as you're proposing, you're ignoring the fact that in Ottawa, after the House of Commons has passed a bill at third reading, it still has to go through the whole process again and there is indeed sober second thought. We cannot give the executive of government the kind of power that is being proposed in these procedural changes because we do not have the opportunity of sober second thought that they do in the Parliament of Canada.

The other interesting thing the government House leader and members of the government caucus refuse to acknowledge, when they say these are just rules from the House of Commons we're bringing into the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, is that they have not taken all the rules from the House of Commons. There are many rules that apply in the House of Commons that are not included in these proposed changes.

Just one, for example, is that there are 20 opposition days per session in the House of Commons. No one has suggested we should have 20 opposition days. If you're going to bring in the kind of rules that make it possible for the government to move legislation through as quickly as is being proposed in these procedural changes, why is it that the kind of procedures that enable the opposition to bring forward their views in the House of Commons are not also being proposed for this assembly? That betrays the fact very clearly that these changes are proposed, not to improve the workings of this House, not to ensure that individual members are able to participate, but simply to make it possible for the government to get its agenda through as quickly as possible, hopefully without too much notice from the public when they're dealing with controversial matters. That's what this is about.

This is not about enhancing democracy in Ontario. It is indeed about efficiency, as is said over and over by the government, but the kind of efficiency that makes it possible for the government to deal with issues quickly without proper debate. That is the kind of efficiency that only talks about time and how long it takes, and doesn't talk about whether or not we are making certain the legislation is going to work well for the people of Ontario.

In the past two weeks the government has brought in legislation which our caucus believes is quite destructive in Ontario. We've seen legislation introduced that will take away the right of workers to strike. The government says, "Well, public sector workers will only temporarily lose this right," but they are losing their rights to free collective bargaining in this province. We've seen legislation that will significantly change the rights of injured workers. We've seen the rights of tenants to protection being threatened. We've seen many changes like this, and there are more changes coming which will

change the education system in this province in a way that will not benefit students and will certainly take away the rights of teachers.

All these things have been brought in by this government. The government would like the public to understand that it's having trouble getting its legislation through, yet as was quoted in the House today I have yet to find anyone in this province who thinks this government is going too slowly. I have never heard that complaint, that the government isn't getting its agenda through quickly enough. As a matter of fact, it is quite the opposite. People are saying, "Wait." Even people who support the agenda are saying: "Wait a minute. Maybe they better slow down a bit and make sure they get it right." What is the rush?

The government even broke a 122-year tradition of not having this assembly meet on the federal election day, on June 2. For 122 years it's been understood that members of this assembly should be able to be in their own constituencies to participate in the federal election by voting for the candidate of their choice, just like the rest of the people who live in their constituencies. But this government said no. Probably because this government couldn't determine which federal party they were supporting, they decided they were going to have this assembly meet on election day so that members had to choose whether to be in their own ridings to cast their ballots or here to do the business of the province.

What did they do the day they met, June 2, on federal election day? One thing they did was the chief government whip called for a recorded vote without notice. It's interesting that the chief government whip did this, because I know if he had been in opposition, as he was for many years, he would have exploded with indignation if a government whip had pulled that on him, because you do not have a recorded vote without notice.

The way it works in this assembly is that the whips talk to one another and say: "Look, what do you want? Do you want a recorded vote? Do you want a division on this, or are we going to have just a voice vote?" The government whip didn't do that on election day. Why? He wanted to embarrass the opposition because a number of opposition members were away. They were in their constituencies to participate in the federal election.

That's the kind of cooperation this government shows members of the opposition. This is a government that complains there isn't enough cooperation in this assembly, yet it treats members of the opposition in that manner. As I said, the chief government whip just would not have stood for that when he was acting as a whip for the third party. That kind of action doesn't bode well for cooperation among the parties in this assembly.

We should also look at what has been happening over the last number of weeks in this House. In the last two weeks there have been 17 procedures in this House that have gone forward that required unanimous consent of the members. Every single member of the assembly had to agree for each of those procedures to go ahead. Also, this House has dealt with two bills in the last two weeks that were only able to be dealt with because the members gave unanimous consent.

How can the government accuse the members of the opposition of not being cooperative when 17 procedures went ahead and two bills were dealt with that required unanimous consent, in only two weeks? I know this doesn't fit with the rhetoric the government has put forward, that somehow there isn't proper cooperation in this assembly. But frankly, from my standpoint, it seems to me the lack of cooperation is mainly centred on that side of the aisle, not on this one. I can tell you now, with the introduction of this motion for procedural changes, there won't be many unanimous consents in future.

1520

The purpose of this assembly is to work for the people of Ontario, not just to let the government agenda go through but to hold the government accountable, to scrutinize what the government is doing and to criticize — yes, criticize — what the government is doing. That is the job of the assembly. It is the particular role of the opposition, but it isn't the role of just the opposition; it is the role of all the members of the House.

The fact is, though, as Mr Eves said in 1992, it doesn't really matter what the rules are for this assembly. It doesn't matter what kind of rule changes the government devises. The assembly only works when the members of the assembly can work together on issues. We have to, as an assembly, find civil ways in which to disagree, because we have genuine disagreements. There are issues we have diametrically opposed views about in this assembly. That's the strength of our system, that we do not prevent different views from being heard. As a matter of fact, our system encourages different views being put forward.

But we have to be able to deal with that in a civil manner. The introduction of these rule changes will have the exact opposite effect, which Mr Eves indicated in 1992 when he said, "If any government ever did proceed unilaterally with rule changes, it would become a very acrimonious place indeed."

That statement by the member for Parry Sound was indeed prophetic. We will find this place very acrimonious if this government proceeds along the track it's headed on now.

How do we find a way to be civil about our disagreements? The only way that can happen is if all members of the House hold each other in respect, if we respect the fact that we have significant differences of opinion but that we are all here as individuals dedicated to the life of this province and to working for the people of Ontario. It doesn't really matter what rules we devise. If that respect does not exist, this place will not work.

What else happened on June 2, the day of the federal election, when this House sat instead of being recessed, as has always been the case, for 122 years? At a time when the interest of the gallery was directed elsewhere — obviously, the press was interested in the federal election; they weren't interested in what was going on around here — what did this government do? On that very day, this government demonstrated its profound lack of respect for the members of this assembly by announcing the very package of rule changes that we're debating right now.

The member for Nepean held a press conference in the media studio in this building, with no notice to the opposition, no notice at all, on a day when our attention and the attention of the press was directed elsewhere. The member for Nepean had the gall to put before the members of the press who did come these rule changes and to say that they were his idea, that they were his proposals and that he was putting them forward only to assist the members of the assembly to have a greater say, a greater role in this House.

When one analyses these rule changes, there are a few which will help the independent member, but the vast majority, the most significant of these rule changes, exist only to enable the government to get its agenda through more quickly, without notice to the public. No individual member, the member for Nepean or anyone else, can argue that it enhances the role of the individual members of this House, because it doesn't. What it does is make it easier for the executive, for the cabinet, to run roughshod over this place to get things through as quickly as possible with as little debate as possible. That's not what this system of government is about.

I like to read the speeches of the member for Parry Sound because he knows a lot about the procedure in this place. On June 22, 1992, he said a couple of other things. In referring to the government he said, "You can't always have everything your own way." He said to the government: "When you don't get something you think you should have, don't be too petulant about it, don't be too autocratic about it and don't be too dictatorial about it. Try to approach it with a sense and a spirit of generosity and compromise and you will find that you will get a lot more things done than you're getting done this way. Just some free advice for the government House leader."

Would that the member for Parry Sound had given this advice to his House leader over the last couple of weeks. You can't get everything your own way. When you don't get something you think you should have, don't be petulant, don't be autocratic and don't be dictatorial. Try a sense of generosity and compromise and you'll get more things done. Just some free advice for the government House leader.

Why is it that this government doesn't listen to the words of the member for Parry Sound, one of its most experienced members? He said further: "I don't know why the government thinks that every time it gets into a difficulty it has to change a rule or pass a motion or introduce closure or introduce time allocations to get the job done that it wants done. Why does the government approach the business of the House with that mentality?"

Well, exactly. I don't know why this government thinks that every time it gets itself into some difficulty, it has to change a rule or pass a motion or introduce closure or introduce time allocations. Why does the government approach the business of the House with that mentality? What is it? Has the Premier pressured the government House leader and, through him, the member for Nepean for these changes? I think that's what has happened.

We all know that the people in the Premier's office think this place is a nuisance, that it gets in the way, doesn't move things forward quickly enough. Debate is

a nuisance. Democracy is a mess. Democracy isn't easy. It isn't efficient. Things don't get done as quickly as they might, because sometimes people have differences of opinion and they want to express them, they want to put them forward on behalf of the people of Ontario. It appears to me that this government is indeed acting petulantly, and of course they brought in a motion to change the rules.

The member for Parry Sound went on further. He said: "Unilateral actions by governments, which can be done if you have a majority, eventually will pass" — that's how you've decided to proceed — "but this will result in nothing but chaos and acrimony around here for the next two or three years. Whenever it is that the Premier decides to call the next election, we will see the results."

Again the member for Parry Sound was very prophetic. I tell you sincerely, if this government insists on proceeding with these rule changes as they are now doing, if they insist that this motion must be passed, there will indeed be chaos and acrimony around here for the next two or three years.

1530

The irony of this situation is that government apparently thinks that by doing this they can move things forward more quickly. But if we have the kind of acrimony the member for Parry Sound predicted, it's going to take longer for them to get these things through; it's going to have the opposite result of the one they desire.

What is it? Is it that the government backbenchers, the members of the Conservative Party who support the government, are angry about the way things work in this place and want to change things? Why? Do they think it's a nuisance to have debate? Do they think it's a nuisance to have to sit here and listen to members of the opposition express views with which they don't agree? Do they think it's inappropriate that the public be notified and understand what's going on and have an opportunity to organize to put forward their views?

I see a member across the way shaking his head no. If that is the case, then why did you bring in rule changes that will make it possible for this government to introduce controversial legislation on Monday and get it through by Thursday? Why? That's not appropriate, but that's what these rule changes mean. If you don't know that, you'd better read them, because that's what they mean.

If that happens, it is possible for any government, this government or any future government, to bring in the most controversial legislation and have it passed before the public even knows about it. That's not democratic. You might as well just rule by decree.

Last week the government House leader gave us the impression that he was prepared to negotiate. He repeated that again today. It didn't take the government House leader long to get away from the fiction that these were ideas of the member for Nepean. He admitted they were government proposals. He said that yes, he did consult with the Premier's office; yes, the Premier's office did have suggestions about what kinds of changes the government wanted; yes, indeed that did happen; and yes, you're going to have to deal with the government House

leader, not the member for Nepean. It didn't take us long to get through that little charade.

But he gave us the impression he wanted to negotiate. The government House leader, as he repeated today, said: "Look, these are not hard and fast. I'm interested in hearing what the opposition House leaders have to say. We're interested in talking." That was Tuesday. The three House leaders had a special meeting on Tuesday.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I called you Tuesday. I called your office three times and you never returned my calls.

Mr Wildman: I'm not even going to respond to that.

If we're going to deal with changes in this House, we're going to deal with them the way they have always been dealt with: among the House leaders. That's our job. That's part of the role of House leaders.

The government House leader said, "We're prepared to negotiate and discuss." That was Tuesday in a special meeting. But what happened? We dealt with the Waterloo bill, we dealt with other pieces of legislation the government wanted through, we got them passed, and then on Thursday at five to five the government introduced this motion and indicated we would be debating it this week. So much for negotiation. Then the government House leader says he wants to debate it again this afternoon. When we give him the opportunity to remove it from the order paper and to sit down as House leaders and say, "Okay, how are we going to deal with this?" he said, "Oh, no, no, we have to debate it."

We know what this is about. This is about getting time in for debate so that at some future date, if the government wishes, the government can bring in time allocation on this motion and force these changes through on the assembly. The government is smart enough, intelligent enough to know that these changes are not going to go through easily.

As I indicated earlier, one of the reasons I'm opposed to this whole process and this motion is that I don't think changing the rules will work even from the government's point of view. Rule changes, and I say this from some experience, do not work.

I want to refer again to the experienced member for Parry Sound and his comments on June 22, 1992:

"The rules can say whatever you want them to say; you can try to tighten them up as much as you want. I've been here, I've seen them changed many times over the last 11-plus years I've been here and it really doesn't make any difference what they say, because there will always be a way to wiggle around one rule or another and the only way this place works is if the three parties can work in some sort of cooperation and concert.

"It means not only the opposition parties giving something up; it means sometimes the government has to compromise." It means sometimes the government has to compromise.

"The only way this place works is if the government compromises and gives, and all majority governments have to compromise or give. It seems as if this government hasn't learned that yet. It still thinks that because it has 74 or 75 members" — in this case 82 members — "it can pass anything it wants and should be able to pass it

on the nod in a skinny minute because it has that many members."

That's a voice of experience. That's an individual who had served at that time in the House for 11 years and had seen rule changes come and go.

The member for Nepean and his colleagues across the way should think about this seriously. This is what the member for Parry Sound said: "It really doesn't make any difference what they say" — what the rules say, in other words — "because there will always be a way to wiggle around one rule or another and the only way this place works is if the three parties can work in some sort of cooperation and concert."

Rule changes do not force people to cooperate. Rule changes do not make people respect one another. Rule changes do not ensure that people work in a way that is cooperative. Moving unilaterally on rule changes, as I've said, has exactly the opposite effect, and it will in this case.

These rule changes are clearly designed to allow the government to implement its agenda more quickly. I think it's important to look at the effects of rule changes that have occurred in the past since I've been here, in the last 22 years or so. I think a number of the government party members believe that if we bring in rule changes, they're going to be able to get more pieces of legislation through.

I see the former member for Oshawa in the gallery, who is very familiar with rule changes and what effects rules can or cannot have in the assembly. He will know, as Mr Eves indicated, once you bring in a rule change, the opposition immediately starts figuring out how to get around it. That's the way it works.

Let's look at the effects. The government members think they're going to be able to get more pieces of legislation through if they have these rule changes. Every government that has brought in rule changes has thought they're going to be able to get more pieces of legislation through. In fact, if you look at the number of pieces of legislation passed per session over the last number of years, the number hasn't changed; it hasn't changed from before rule changes when rule changes have occurred.

What has changed is that controversial pieces of legislation, ones that result in a tremendous amount of opposition, can indeed be passed more quickly in the House, because the government can use the rules, they can bring in time allocation or whatever, to get those particular pieces of legislation through more quickly. But what happens is that the opposition then slows up all the non-controversial pieces of legislation, and that is indeed what has happened. We're finding ourselves in this assembly spending time debating pieces of legislation about which there isn't a great deal of controversy over a long period of time whereas in the past they might have passed more quickly.

Why? It started and was exacerbated after the rule changes by the Liberal Party in 1989, and then it went even further after our government brought in rule changes in 1992. It got to the point that while we were government, particularly the third party, the Conservative Party at that time, debated every piece of legislation as if it was the most momentous piece ever to be introduced, no

matter how innocuous members of the general public would consider it, to the point where the government was tempted to bring in time allocation on almost everything. The kind of cooperation that is necessary for this place to operate well did not exist and the rules did not require or make that kind of cooperation exist. In fact, they had the exact opposite effect.

In the late 1970s, controversial pieces of government legislation were often debated for weeks and weeks. As a result of rule changes over the last number of years, the time allocation motion means that governments can, without unanimous consent, pass every controversial bill in six days. Under these rules they want to make it three days. The government House leader wants to get these bills through in three days.

We'll see what effect this has, but I suspect that if the government is determined to move forward on these kinds of changes, the government will be able to get its controversial legislation through more quickly. I don't think that will be good for Ontario, I don't think it will be good for the people in communities across this province, and ironically, I don't think it's going to be good for the government of Ontario either. They will be able to get their controversial legislation through more quickly, but overall they're going to have a harder time getting other things through.

I suppose this government feels, "That's okay because we only have controversial matters to bring forward." I don't know, that may be the case, but I don't think it's going to serve the people of the province well.

Under the last Parliament, opposition parties began to construe time limits to be time minimums. Legislation which had previously passed without extensive debate received considerable attention by the opposition parties, both Liberal and Tory. When I first came to this place, a bill that might be passed in one afternoon would go on for days, the same kind of legislation.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): That was before television.

Mr Wildman: The member for Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and East Grenville said, "That was before television." Television may have had some effect. I don't think it has a major effect. We all thought it was going to have a tremendous effect in this House. In fact, I'm not sure it did. I don't think television makes people speak for the full time they have available to them.

Mr Baird: Prove it.

Mr Wildman: No, it doesn't. What produces that is when there's controversial legislation that people want to get a number of points in about. I think that's what produces that kind of result.

What else produces it is when the government is introducing a bill that isn't controversial, when the specific legislation being debated isn't controversial but there isn't the spirit of cooperation in the House that makes it possible to get it through.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker: Please have that man removed.

The House recessed from 1545 to 1557.

The Acting Speaker: Would you restore the time owed to the member for Algoma, please.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I appreciate your taking that action. All of us who are in this assembly understand that this is a people place. All of us are elected to represent the people and the people will be heard. If people feel that they are being shut out, if the government is bringing in rule changes that will make it possible to bring in legislation and have it passed within three days instead of the current six days, people will not be able to be heard.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that a quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check if there is a quorum present, please.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: As I said, this is a people place and the people will be heard. If the government is determined to bring in rule changes and make it possible to pass legislation in a total of three days, when the current minimum is six, the people will be shut out. When the people are shut out of our system, then they will find extraparliamentary measures for expressing their views. That is not healthy for our system.

This is a place where views are to be expressed, sometimes vehemently, where people are able to be assured that their views will be presented on their behalf, and if that is not possible because of rule changes brought in by a government determined to force things through as quickly as possible, then they will find other ways, and that will not be good for our system.

This is not a debate about the right of members — it is, but that's just part of it — this is a debate about democracy. This is a debate about the rights of the citizens of this province to ensure that they can be involved, that they are informed, that they know what's going on and that they can influence what happens. Speed and expediency are not the most important elements in a democracy. What is important is to ensure that people are heard, that people's views are expressed and that they are responded to; that there is a serious scrutiny of government legislation, that where changes are needed, they are made, and that the time is available to make that possible.

I'd like to deal specifically with some of the rules in the last few minutes remaining.

The government is proposing changes to standing order 9, which regulates House sitting times. This is perhaps the most dangerous of the changes that are being proposed by this government. This change would allow the House to sit from 6:30 to 9:30 at night. A motion to extend the sitting beyond 6 o'clock could be brought forward by the government at any time without notice. But what is really significant is that under these proposed rule changes, this kind of extension would not just be an extension of the day, it would be a separate sessional day. So with one half-hour recess, we would then be into a new day for debate in the evening.

The rules would also allow the government to move, again without notice, a motion to sit beyond 9:30 in the

evening. What does this mean? Some people would say: "If you have an important issue before the House, why not extend the time? What's the problem?" What it means is that by calling it a separate sessional day, it makes it possible for this government to count a few hours as a different day and justify in their own minds, if not in anyone else's, bringing in time allocation but not having to wait for the number of days actually to have passed. It means that controversial government legislation could be passed much more quickly, before there is time for the media to report on the bill, before there is time for the public to become informed about the bill and before opponents of the bill could organize any opposition.

The government argues, "Well, the MPPs would still have the same amount of time to debate." That's true, they would, but that debating time would be crammed into three days, and the public wouldn't hear about it, wouldn't know about it. That's what this is about. This is about a cloak-and-dagger approach to government. That's what this is about. This is about sneaking things through, getting things through so the public won't be able to react and respond if they're opposed.

What this means is that if this government had moved in this manner under these rules on the megacity legislation, they could have introduced it on the Monday for first reading, extended the session, had the first day of debate on second reading in the evening, come back the next afternoon and had another day of debate on second reading, extended the debate into that evening, counted it as another day — that would be three days — and then they could have brought in time allocation. That's what it means.

What does it mean in terms of the working around here? This is a minor matter, but it's important to making sure that this place works in a cooperative way. What it would mean is that because the government could do this without notice, the opposition wouldn't know what's coming. They wouldn't have any idea. The government members might know, if the government House leader deigned to tell them. They might know what's coming, but the members of the opposition wouldn't and certainly members of the public wouldn't know.

It shows no respect to the operation of this place as a Legislature representing the people. You can't run a Legislature the way you run a railroad. You can't say, "It's only important to have the trains get through on time."

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): Who said that? Who was it?

Mr Wildman: That's what this is about. That was a phrase that was used in the 1930s in Italy, and we know who was in charge. That's what it was. Oh, the trains ran on time. Sure, there was no democracy, but the trains ran on time.

Standing order 11: When a quorum call is lost at private members' hour, only the morning sitting is lost, not the whole day. I wonder why this has been proposed. In the 22 years that I've served in this chamber, this trick, because that's what it is, has only been used once. Do you know who used it? The person who is now the chief government whip. Mr Turnbull used that when we

were in government. He called a quorum during private members' hour. A quorum wasn't present, so the House was recessed for the rest of the day and in the afternoon government legislation could not be proceeded with. That is the only time it has ever been done and now this government wants to bring in a rule to prevent it. I suspect it's because they might think that somebody on this side might be tempted to a little bit of payback.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order. Member for St Catharines, come to order.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Madam Speaker — *Interjection.*

The Acting Speaker: I'm not required to stop the clock. Can you give me your point of order, please?

Mr Baird: Yesterday the Chair, on a good number of occasions, called to order members of the opposition when they repeatedly used the words "Fascist" and "Fascism." I think it belittles the very serious atrocities committed in this —

Interjections.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Go and bully the poor; bully the weak.

Mr Baird: We listened to you —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean, come to order. Everybody come to order. I was not in the House yesterday when that happened. I didn't hear it today. I would ask all members to please come to order. Member for Algoma, continue.

1610

Mr Wildman: I just wish the chief government whip had been as concerned in 1992 when he pulled this trick about ensuring that government business could proceed as he apparently is now. It's only been used once, yet this government thinks we need a rule change to deal with it, perhaps because this government judges everybody by their own behaviour.

Changes to standing order 24: This restricts the leadoff speeches to 40 minutes and regular speeches to 20 minutes, and after five hours' debate, speeches will be limited to 10 minutes. This is from a member who claimed he was trying to protect the rights of individual members. To protect the rights of individual members by limiting the time they have to debate? What a farce. This is clearly an attempt by the government to limit debate.

If the government were really serious about giving their backbenchers time to speak, they wouldn't try to get bills through as quickly as they're trying to. Just give a couple more days of debate, and then any government backbencher who wants to participate in the debate would be able to. The only reason they don't have a chance to is that this government is determined to have bills passed more quickly than they should. If the government wants government backbenchers to be able to participate in debate, they should schedule time for debate that allows them to do that rather than changing the rules to limit the time that individual members can participate.

We've already talked about this argument about these rules being just a copy of the House of Commons. You don't see people reacting in the House of Commons this way, because there are a number of differences, which I've talked about. There are three times as many members

trying to get on the debate. We don't have that problem. As a matter of fact, we're going to have fewer members.

Changes to standing order 28: Allowing for abstentions but not allowing them to be entered into the record of Parliament. How is it that you're going to allow for abstentions but you're not going to allow them to be recorded? If somebody wants to abstain under a rule change like this, they should at least have the opportunity to have it recorded. If somebody doesn't have the guts to stand up and vote yes or no, they should at least have it noted in the record, because they can in fact stay out if they don't want to vote. But what does this mean? This means that government backbenchers who don't want to vote for something can be here and not vote, and it's not recorded. This is ridiculous.

I remember the member for — was it Grey-Owen Sound, Eddie Sargent, a number of years ago?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The member for Grey-Bruce.

Mr Wildman: Grey-Bruce. He attempted to abstain at one point, as I recall, and he was called to order and was informed that he had to vote yes or no, which he did.

This is related to the so-called Alvin Curling episode. The idea is to prevent a member from refusing to vote and thus holding up the procedure. I can tell the government this: If this government is stupid enough to try to move forward with an omnibus bill again, a bill like Bill 26, it won't matter what the rule is. We'll find a way of stopping them. We'll find a way of slowing them down. We'll find a way of ensuring that there are proper public hearings. We'll find a way to ensure that this government has to give the public the opportunity to participate in the process, as they should. We will stand up for democracy no matter what your rules say.

I'd just like to know what this government is afraid of. What piece of legislation do they intend to bring forward in this House that requires this rule change?

Changes to standing order 30: This means reordering the routine proceedings so that committee reports, introduction of bills and motions will come before question period instead of after, as they do now. It also creates a new routine proceeding called "deferred votes," a mandatory commencement of orders of the day by 4 o'clock, regardless of whether question period is over. What does this mean? Of course, we know it means that you'll have all of these procedures taking place before question period can commence, and then, if question period is going beyond 4 o'clock, it's unilaterally ended at 4 o'clock. It's about truncating question period. It's about ensuring there aren't as many questions. It's about ensuring that the government isn't held accountable by the opposition, which is what this place is about.

The government House leader tried to justify this by saying that in other legislative assemblies in this country, they don't have the same length of question period, and he said that in some places there is only 15 minutes for question period. Let me tell you something: The British Columbia Legislature does indeed only have a 15-minute question period, but they don't time it the way we time it; they don't time the answers. The length of time for the answers is not included in that 15 minutes, so it works

out to almost the same length of time as our question period.

But then these guys don't know this, because most of them don't have any experience. The one person who does have experience, who understands how this place works, who understands the rules, is the former House leader for that party, and he has advised against this very process that you're proceeding with.

I quoted him extensively in my discussion of this matter, and he has advised against this. He said that changing rules in this way will make this an acrimonious place. We've seen that demonstrated this afternoon. The member for Parry Sound was quite prophetic. Would that his caucus at least listen to him on this issue.

We will hold the government accountable because that's our role. I hope the government backbenchers would want to hold the government accountable, because that is their role as well. We will do it no matter what rules you try to impose on us, because Mr Eves was correct: It doesn't really matter what the rules state if there's no respect for one another in this place, if there's no cooperation. You cannot legislate respect, and if you try to legislate rule changes, you are going to eliminate what vestiges of respect still exist in this place.

Why is it that the government is creating a deferred votes routine proceeding which takes away one of the few rights the opposition now has to defer votes? Why is that a problem? Frankly, on Thursday afternoons the government whip is often asking if we'd like to defer a vote to Monday. Why is it this government is now talking about rule changes that would prevent the opposition from requesting a deferred vote? It doesn't make any sense to me except that it appears this government is bound and determined to stomp on the opposition at every chance with these rules.

There are other changes, rules that were purported to enhance the role and the rights of individual members. Changes to standing order 36(h): This would give the government 45 sessional days, rather than the current eight days, to respond to a petition. Why does the government need 45 days to respond to a petition? Give me any reason that the government needs 10 weeks to respond to a petition. All this means is it's going to make it less possible to keep the government accountable. It's going to give the public less say, because where do petitions generate from? They come from the public. The public is aggrieved about something and they have the petition to bring their grievances before the government. This is one of the oldest rights in our democracy; it goes back to the Magna Carta, to 1215, Runnymede, the right of the people to petition the government, to petition the King, the monarch, and now this government takes it upon itself to try and make it less possible for people to have some say even with petitions.

Changes to standing order 97(d): This gives the government 45 sessional days, rather than the 14 calendar days, to answer order paper questions, and no member will be able to have more than four order paper questions on at a time. What does this mean? All it means is again the government is going to be less accountable. An individual member could put four questions on the order paper. All the government has to do after 45 days is say,

"We can't answer this question. We won't be able to answer it for a while," and leave it like that, and the individual member won't be able to put any more questions on the order paper because the government just refuses to answer. Again, it's to make the government less accountable to the members of this assembly, and thus to the members of the public of Ontario.

1620

Why does the government need 10 weeks? They don't, obviously. They don't need 10 weeks to respond. Why, if they are not attempting to make it less possible for the opposition to hold the government accountable, are they limiting the number of questions that a member can have put on the order paper? I think I know why. I think it's because this government is derelict in answering its order paper questions. I think it's because they don't answer petitions when they're supposed to. That then gives the opposition, under the current rules, the opportunity to get up on a point of order and hold things up by asking where the answer to the question is that was supposed to be provided within the time limit of eight calendar days. It's to make things more convenient for the government, to get away from the nuisance of having to answer questions and be held accountable. That's what this is about.

Standing order 68 will be deleted. Standing order 68 says that the government cannot introduce legislation during the last two weeks of a sessional period and have the bill receive second reading. The government can introduce a bill for first reading, but it can't proceed beyond first reading in the last two weeks. I think it's important for us to talk a little bit about the history of this rule, where it came from.

Those of us in the know who have been around here for a while refer to this as the Ernie Eves rule. That's where it came from. In 1992, when there were discussions and debate and negotiations around changes in the rules, this change was proposed, but it was proposed by the member for Parry Sound, who was then the House leader for the third party. He did this because it wasn't fair to the opposition to have new legislation introduced at the very last minute rather than having proper scrutiny over a period of time during the session.

I wonder if the government House leader, or even the member for Nepean, understood that they were trying to get rid of a rule that was proposed by the Minister of Finance, in bringing this forward.

Mr Marchese: Madam Speaker, on a point of order: I don't think there's a quorum in the House, and there should be.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, could you check the quorum, please.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Algoma.

Mr Wildman: As you would know, Speaker, it is the government's responsibility to maintain a quorum.

I was referring to the proposed changes for standing order 68. Rules are in the standing orders for a reason.

They're not put there just arbitrarily by most governments, unlike this one. This rule is to make it impossible for the government to sit on its most controversial legislation and then proceed at lightning speed at the very end of the session with very controversial pieces of legislation and force them through.

This is to prevent the government from forcing legislation through during the summer, when it would not receive the public scrutiny it deserves. This is a protection for the members of the assembly, a protection for the opposition that was proposed by the member for Parry Sound. I agree with the member for Parry Sound. It's unfortunate that his own government apparently does not. They see it now as an inconvenience.

Standing order 77: This will be amended so that bills will be referred to committee of the whole House at the request of the government and takes away the right of opposition MPPs to refer controversial bills to committee of the whole House. It has always been the right of all members, no matter what side of the House, not just the government, to have legislation referred to committee of the whole. It has always been there.

The way it has been dealt with, by convention, is that the House leaders will talk to each other in advance. The government House leader says: "We want to proceed with this particular piece of legislation. How long do you think it will take to get through?" The opposition House leaders tell them and then they get to the point: "What about committee? Do you think we'll need committee? What about committee of the whole?" Usually in advance everybody says, "Yes, we think it should go to committee of the whole," or, "No, we don't."

Remember that when the press conference, the media conference, was held on June 2, federal election day, the member for Nepean introduced these proposed rule changes and he said the reason he was producing these rule change proposals was to enhance the rights of members. This particular change in itself, along with the cut in the length of time people can debate, belies that. How can anyone pretend that this is an attempt to enhance the rights of members when it directly takes away the right of the opposition members to refer a matter to the committee of the whole, and not just the opposition MPPs but the government backbenchers too, because it only can be referred by the government to committee of the whole?

I know perhaps it's whistling in the wind, but I really do wish members opposite were listening to this debate and understood the sincerity with which I and other members have put forward our views, and would listen to the quotes that I put on the record from the member for Parry Sound. The member for Parry Sound was putting forward views that were based on his experience as a legislator who had spent a good deal of time in this House and understood the ramifications of rule changes and moving unilaterally by the government.

There are two things I want to conclude by saying. First, if the government thinks that by bringing in rule changes it's going to be able to get its agenda through more quickly, let me tell you right here it won't work, just as the member for Parry Sound in 1992 said it wouldn't work. It won't. If the government forces these

changes on this assembly, this place will be, as the member for Parry Sound said, a very acrimonious place. It will not get things through more quickly. Individual bills may in fact get through without public scrutiny. If that happens, the members of this assembly will have failed in their duty to the citizens of this province. That may happen.

But overall, the government agenda will not move forward any more quickly, because it doesn't matter what the rules are. As soon as you bring in new rule changes, it is my job and the job of all members of this House to ensure that we're able to put forward the views of the people of the province, and if we have to do it by going around the rules, we will. It's not just my agenda; it has been the agenda of every opposition, whether they be New Democrat, Liberal or Tory. It was the agenda of the Conservative Party when they were the third party and we were the government, and I respect that.

Mr Pouliot: You're a bully. Je n'ai pas peur de toi ; ferme ta gueule. Okay, le fasciste.

The Acting Speaker: Come to order, please.

Mr Wildman: The government cannot bully its way through this. I guess the frivolity with which this is treated is an indication that it doesn't really matter what we say. The government is determined to do this no matter what. Democracy is getting in their way. It's a nuisance. This assembly is just a nuisance. Why not just be able to govern by decree? It would be much easier. You wouldn't have the messy experience of having to listen to the public. You wouldn't have to have committees. You wouldn't have to do any of that: Just introduce a bill on Monday and have it pass by Thursday. Just do that, get things through: "Let's move. Get those trains moving."

1630

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Sounds good.

Mr Wildman: The member says it sounds good. He obviously doesn't understand the legislative process if he says that sounds good, because sometimes even the most well-thought-out legislation includes problems that are discovered when the public has an opportunity to scrutinize that legislation and to bring forward their concerns in committee. Sometimes private members, members of the opposition, are able to identify problems in legislation. If all you're concerned about is speed, that is sacrificed. That's not good for the legislative process; it's not good for the people of Ontario.

I conclude by quoting again the member for Parry Sound, who I think was trying to help the people of Ontario when he said: "I believe it is essential that we change the rules only by consensus of all three parties. Sure, any government, I suppose, that has a majority can change them unilaterally." None ever has in this province. I hope that none ever will. I hope that just doesn't happen. "If any government ever did proceed unilaterally with rule changes, it would become a very acrimonious place indeed." Unilateral actions by government, which can be done if you have a majority, eventually will pass, but as he said, it will result in nothing but chaos and acrimony around here.

It's not me saying that; it's the member for Parry Sound. I believe that the member for Parry Sound, who

is now, in case some of you don't know, the Minister of Finance, meant what he said in 1992. I believe he was sincere. I believe that was one of the reasons there were negotiations at that point on rule changes. I believe that was one of the reasons the government of the day, our government, actually accepted a proposed rule change from the member for Parry Sound, one of the very rules this government is now trying to change.

But I've learned from experience, in 1992 and 1989 and previous years, that it doesn't matter what the rules are if there isn't proper respect and cooperation in this House. Those experienced members across the way know that's the case. It doesn't matter to me what you do: If you're determined to run roughshod over the rights of members, to change the rules to make it impossible for this assembly to properly do its job, all I can tell you is that we will set about finding how we will do our job. We will do it to ensure that, as the member for Parry Sound said, when the government needs to be delayed, they will be delayed; when the time is right for a government to be held up, they will be held up.

We will do everything possible to pass legislation such as the Waterloo bill, which is desired and proper, to expedite that passage. But when there is legislation brought through against the wishes of the people, such as the megacity bill that 76% of the people voted against, we will hold you up no matter what the rules.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate today. Today's very important debate is about the proposed changes to the standing orders. We're all familiar with Mr Johnson's resolution, which stems from the discussions that were held within our caucus looking for change. That discussion was led by the member for Nepean, who will be speaking later today.

I want to stick to a couple of central themes to this. I want to start by saying to the people watching today and the people in the House listening that I may not agree with some of the things that are said, but I will defend your right to say it. We're all familiar with that expression. That's what the parliamentary process is all about, listening and responding, but we also in debate must move forward.

For the last decade, changes to the standing orders have been made. In fact, the first attempt to change the standing orders in recent memory was by the Liberals in 1989, and more recently, in June 1992, the NDP amended the standing orders, and well they should have. With the style and method and number of and type of legislation they were bringing forward to expedite the process in a fair and reasonable way, I think it's within their mandate to make those changes.

As the member for Algoma said here today, democracy is clumsy and slow and sometimes frustrating, and I'd agree with him, but as has been said in history before, it's the best alternative we've heard of. We must each cherish it and not abuse it and not threaten to diminish its importance.

This is the standing order rule book that the members here are supposed to abide by and is enforced by the Speaker of the House and the Clerk at the Table to make sure that members conform to the rules.

As a new member, when I first arrived here, I have to admit I was quite surprised at how perhaps unproductive the process seemed to be. I questioned this within the Legislative Assembly committee, which was chaired by Ted Arnott, who had been here before, a young member. I asked him, "When did this change?" I tried to trace the problematic situation of how much theatre actually occurs here, and he said that probably about the time the television came in it became a little more theatrical. It is in that vein that I heard from my constituents that even they were embarrassed.

I'm going to read the very first letter I got from the then Speaker, Mr McLean. Speaker McLean wrote to all members on November 15, 1995. Remember, the election had just been held. He said: "The problem of order and decorum in the Legislative Assembly is being brought to my attention almost daily. I am being severely criticized by phone, mail and visiting students concerning the lack of decorum in the House. I've enclosed a couple of examples...." and he cited the standing orders.

It was at that point in time that I personally became aware that it wasn't something unique to me. Decorum and other issues in the House were discussed in our caucus; in fact they were discussed among new members as part of our orientation. I remember very clearly the naming of the first member in the House and how disappointed I was that a member was named and then in some respects refused to leave. I understand they're in the moment of the battle; they're frustrated and perhaps quite confrontational.

But it went on from there. As I said, there were other incidents that precipitated my own action. I was a member of the Legislative Assembly committee, an all-party committee which is supposed to deal with amendments or changes to the standing orders; at least that was my understanding. I spoke to the clerk of that committee at the time, Ms Freedman, and she advised me that that was the appropriate place. On my own, after what we would like to refer to as the refusal to vote incident, the Alvin Curling incident, I felt, gee, it was quite unusual. I looked into it and it turns out that in Ottawa a member can refuse to vote, abstain from voting, and remain in the House. So I composed a resolution. This dates back — I'm just giving you the history, for the people paying attention — to December 13, 1995, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. I will read this: "Do committee members have any other business?"

Mr Bradley: Why don't we just close the Legislature and let Harris run the province by himself?

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, order. 1640

Mr O'Toole: At that point in the proceedings I brought up my own motion, and if I could read it into the record, I said:

"I move that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to review and report on the issue of decorum in the Legislature as well as the disciplinary powers of the Speaker. An examination of these processes both in Ontario and in other legislative precincts will be necessary.

"Furthermore, as the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly is currently reviewing other security and

related issues, it may be appropriate to include this concern at the same time because we'll be dealing with many of the same people," that is, the Speakers and Clerks of those legislatures; Quebec and Ottawa is where we visited.

"This review by the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly will be authorized to examine, among other things:

"The authority of the Speaker to name members; use of force by the Sergeant at Arms," and to examine the standing order on votes or the ability to abstain from voting and the committee to also examine other points of privilege and points of order.

Back in December 1995 — to suggest that this government has not been frustrated with the process would in itself be rather misleading. It's not true.

As I said, as part of this ongoing discussion, the member for Nepean, from our caucus, in his current position took on an attempt to consult with members of caucus and brought to our attention a number of occurrences, both the piece of information I just read out —

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, member for St Catharines.

Mr O'Toole: — as well as Bill 33, which was a private member's bill moved on April 12, 1996, by Mr Flaherty from Durham Centre. It was a private member's bill dealing with amendments to the standing orders, very much on the same subject of trying to bring some respect to the rules, respect and order in this House.

To think that we can protest without respecting this place is not acceptable, in my humble opinion. I believe this place and the function of this particular room deserve the respect of all members. Just most recently I was appalled by the lack of respect by Mr Kormos from Welland-Thorold. I could quote the Hansard record right here, where he actually was swearing at one of our ministers. I think that has to be brought to task. That kind of thing is unacceptable.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Must have been a good reason.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Cochrane North, come to order.

Mr O'Toole: Out of respect for our constituents and out of the respect —

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Ms Martel, out of respect for members in your riding, please show respect.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham East, take your seat for a moment. Order.

Mr Pouliot: Mr O'Toole, you went against native Canadians, you went against the French, you went against the immigrants.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order, please. Member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: The member for Sudbury East has raised a point that would suggest that perhaps we should allow disorder. I believe disorder is the very beginning of a complete breakdown of the system and that disorder was witnessed here —

Ms Martel: Call in the police then, John, that's how you guys operate.

Mr O'Toole: The member for Sudbury East, I would ask you to respect my opportunity to speak, to listen — *Interjections.*

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Durham East, I would remind you to please direct your comments to the Chair. All members, please come to order. Thank you. Proceed.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You can see the tenseness in the House today.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): And you are creating the tension.

Mr O'Toole: It's in that kind of atmosphere that we become very unproductive. The member for Kingston and The Islands is there, not sitting in his chair, commenting, absolutely slovenly, sitting around this place disrespectful of the whole system.

Ms Martel: Who are you? You're a joke. Who are you to talk about others.

Mr O'Toole: I'm actually — the member for Sudbury East, do you want the floor?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham East, please address your comments to the Chair. Just one moment, take your seat. I would ask members to —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Member for Durham East, it would be more helpful if you not indulge in personal commentary on people in the House. I would ask all members to avoid that. This is a very difficult debate and that is not helpful.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Out of respect —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands, a point of order?

Mr Gerretsen: A point of privilege, Madam Speaker: As I walked through the door and in amazement listened to this member, I believe he made some disreputable —

The Acting Speaker: I don't have order in this House when I am listening to a point of privilege. I have to hear this. I would ask the members to please come to order.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): Good for you, not for me.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Perth, come to order. I'm trying to hear a point of privilege.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Member for Kingston and The Islands, you have a point of privilege.

Mr Gerretsen: My point of privilege is simply this: I walked into the House and listened in absolute amazement to the member opposite talking about this bill, when all of a sudden he made a personal attack on my reputation in this House. I think my privileges as a member have been abused by that. As I was walking to my seat, he somehow made some sort of comment about the way I was dressed and the way I was sitting when in fact I was standing. I would like him to withdraw those remarks.

The Acting Speaker: Before the point of order was raised I actually asked the member for Durham East and all members to not begin to personally attack people. I

would ask the member for Durham East to withdraw that comment and perhaps he would like to apologize.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I do respect the member for Kingston and The Islands, the chief opposition whip. He above all should know the standing rules and he should know he should not be speaking from the —

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I'll try to proceed and address my comments to you. Just today is a perfect example of why we have to bring in some rule changes to be more productive in this place on behalf of the people of Ontario who elect us and pay us. We've got to become a little bit more focused on trying to make Ontario great again. It has deteriorated in my view in the last number of years.

There would be those who say that what we're trying to do as a government — they would disagree with us, but there are other ways to appropriately — I fully agree, the opposition has a responsibility and many of the members on the other side do make very good arguments. In fact, if we approach any change during debate — that's their duty. The member for St Catharines does it as well as anyone in this House. It's to oppose, to oppose, to oppose.

As I go back and I look through the history of this thing, it's very informative. I'm just going to read this. It may be a bit of a test here.

"These rule changes...are significant. They do move this Legislature forward, and they move it forward in a way that respects a lot of what is being done in other parliaments in the British Commonwealth. I believe they are changes that effect a fair and reasonable balance, giving to this government a clearer means by which to get on with its business."

This was said in the debate on the standing order changes in 1989 by a very formidable, eloquent speaker in this House, the member for Renfrew North, Mr Conway, and I have no better respect for anyone. Mr Conway says that these are tough rules, and they were trying to make rule changes.

I would go on to suggest one more here. This one I would ask the members of the third party to listen to:

"I always thought the premise of the Legislature was that the government did get the opportunity to propose and the opposition got the opportunity to oppose, which is exactly what the opposition parties are doing," and doing today. It is their duty to do it. No matter what rule change package came forward with the government, it's their job to oppose it. So it wouldn't matter how fair and reasonable these rules changes were; it's their job to oppose. I don't envy your role.

1650

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Member for Cochrane North, I don't envy your role. However difficult it is, at the end of the day many times I'm sure you'd like to agree with us, but it's your job to oppose.

Interjection: Their whip wouldn't let them.

Mr O'Toole: The whip won't let them. That's for sure.

Tax cuts: Many of the people, I know they want it.

Mr Gerretsen: We can't afford a tax cut.

Mr O'Toole: The member for Kingston and The Islands, I'm sure they want it.

Interjection: They want to pay more.

Mr O'Toole: They want to pay more.

The government should have the opportunity to vote on the business of the day. That's what it's about.

I could go on. There are a number of quotes that are worth citing in here, but suffice to say that the history of changing the standing orders is such that it is fraught with opposition, controversy and an attempt to disrupt the whole proceeding.

We saw today — and I was appalled. I looked in here today, and we had to adjourn the House; we had to recess for a while. Why did we have to recess? It all started when one of the visitors here, a well-known — not so well respected, but well known — member of society, Mr Sewell, asked, "When am I going to get my chance to speak?" My response to Mr Sewell is, if you want a chance to speak, put your name on the ballot. Let the people speak through you. But no, he would use this opportunity to come into this wonderful, historic facility, this historic room, and cause a ruckus to deteriorate the conditions in this room, to insult the young students visiting this Legislature and to show them the indignity of how low the debate can really go.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr O'Toole: It's shameful.

One of the demonstrators today did something I think was deplorable.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr O'Toole: Madam Speaker, if I could get the third party to just listen. I've got a few minutes left. We listened to the member for Algoma.

The Acting Speaker: I ask members of the opposition to please come to order. Member for Durham East, go ahead.

Mr O'Toole: It's very difficult. I end up raising my voice, which sounds like I'm agitated and I'm really not. I think it's important. I do want to be heard.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham East, take your seat. I'm going to say that both sides of the House, I would remind the member speaking now, at times are heckling quite a lot here. Out of respect for the member who is speaking, I would ask all members of the House to come to order.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was done so tastefully. I wish it ran like that all the time. You did that with a nice flair.

My final comment on the demonstration today, which again really reinforced for me the importance of this change — and I'm going to recount this as if it was a court of law — is that one of the demonstrators unfurled a demonstration banner with the words "Adolf Harris." Where is the mode of expression in there? That's a completely unacceptable analogy. In my view, it's a very sinister kind of attitude.

There was one other thing. When the security people tried to retrieve the banner, that same demonstrator bit one of the security guards. I think we have sunk to the

lowest kind of behaviour, almost animal-like, not good, although I'm looking over and there are other members here — I don't like to make it personal, because I'm not perfect. Don't throw the first stone, so I won't.

But I would say that those who watch this channel — I'll give you a one-word description of about four incidents: most recently, the Kormos incident of profanity in this House; prior to that, the April filibuster, where we spent almost two weeks reading the streets of the city of Toronto, a shameful waste of taxpayers' time; another incident where Mr Bradley almost had an altercation; and another incident where Mr Curling had to almost, if you will, discharge himself in the House. Those are a little litany of incidents that I think are —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of privilege, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the member for Scarborough North, who isn't here today: To make that kind of a comment about something about which he knows absolutely nothing is totally out of order. The privileges of the members of this House have been violated. I would ask you to withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham East, I would ask you once again to be careful in your personal attacks on other members of the chamber. I really would ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr O'Toole: I'll withdraw the comments. I should refer to members from their riding, and then most people would know — but I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Pouliot: By this time, you should be housebroken.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Lake Nipigon, come to order. Member for Durham East, you know what I was specifically referring to, what the point of privilege was on, and that is what I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr Bert Johnson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The members have taken up time with two trivial points of privilege. The time has gone off the clock for the member, nearly five minutes. I think it should be restored.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Everybody come to order. Okay, order. As we say in Newfoundland, listen, me old trouts, this is really gettin' out of hand.

Member for Perth, that is not a point of order. The members were rising on legitimate points of privilege and order. I'm listening carefully to everything that has been said here. I would ask the member for Durham East to continue. He has got about eight minutes left.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gave me a little chance to recompose and focus on the task.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I still can't hear the member for Durham East. Now come to order.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Nobody wants to.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr O'Toole: Madam Speaker, thank you for the floor. Out of respect for the students, there are two schools at

least, or a couple of classes of students, visiting the Legislature today. When I have completed speaking, I would like to go out and speak to this class and ask their opinion as visitors to this House, to their House, to their Legislature, and ask what they think of the order and respect for one another in this House.

Mr Gerretsen: They think you're disgraceful. That's what they think.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr O'Toole: I would expect also that members should know that the member for Nepean has really tried to lead a very grass-roots approach to amending the process of the standing orders to make them harmonious with the standing orders that are used in the House of Commons in Ottawa.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Come on, come on, order.

Mr O'Toole: I'm going to read a piece of correspondence that the member for Nepean wrote to the member of the Liberal Party.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Members, come to order, please.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Baird wrote on June 3 to the member from the opposition party, Mr Dalton McGuinty:

"I have listened with great interest to your thoughts on my proposals to amend the standing orders and want to clarify some of the misunderstandings. It was the changes imposed by the previous Liberal and NDP governments that reduced the rights of individual members to cut the amount of debate time in the Legislature. My proposals do absolutely nothing to cut back on the amount of debate time in the Legislature, it simply shares it." In fact, they do the opposite: They propose to allow more members more opportunity to speak and represent their constituents. We would be more democratic to have more voices heard.

As Leader of the Opposition, you can speak on any bill. My colleagues on the back bench cannot. Day after day my colleagues sit and listen to the same members on the front bench, both ministers and front-bench opposition members, speak for up to 90 minutes when we can't even speak for 10 minutes. It is a real privilege for me to speak on behalf of my constituents in Durham East. You will appreciate how frustrating it really is, Mr Speaker. I see the Speaker has changed.

1700

In question period, quite often the questions are asked by the critics from the opposition to the ministers. It's very seldom that backbenchers on the government side actually get the time to participate in the House on behalf of their constituents.

In the last few minutes of my time, I would have you know that the proposed changes to the standing orders, if anyone is listening or watching today, are very simply summarized as follows:

Debate and vote on the budget, something that hasn't happened in the last three of 10 years: Members have a right to debate and vote on the budget.

Have their private members' bills voted on, unlike Bill 33 which was blocked for a vote: The current undemo-

cratic practice allows 12 members to stand and block a vote, which they did on Mr Flaherty —

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't know if this is the member who said to the Port Perry Star that —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Member for Kenora, take your seat, please. The member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: — while the rule has been used 82 times, generally by the government, to stop an opposition bill.

Another point: Enjoy more debate by permitting the House to sit more than 4.5 hours a day. Sitting more than 20 hours a week is hardly revolutionary. We have to bring the House into the 21st century.

Enjoy more debate by allowing the House to sit for more than 25 weeks a year. Isn't it quite astounding that the standing orders today must be changed to allow us to sit more than 25 weeks? There are 52 weeks in a year.

Cutting short MPPs' breaks to deal with public business: I know here today that an extensive amount of time is spent on other business by all members, but the House is where the business should occur, and that's all we're asking.

I think Mr Baird is imploring the Liberal leader to work with his caucus to bring about change. I know Mr Baird is not alone in this. All members are here listening to this debate. I know members from all three parties are here.

The member for Algoma clearly said he would break the rules to make his point. That's clearly what he said in the debate today. I suspect the opposition has a very frustrating role, and I appreciate that, but I think we have to live within the rules of society and I expect that we should live within the rules of this House and find other ways to demonstrate.

I am expected and quite prepared to meet constituents in my office, in front of my office and on the lawn here at Queen's Park.

Mr Miclash: That is not what you said in the newspaper, John.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kenora.

Mr O'Toole: Bill 48, the social contract, was time-allocated and they used closure. That was their biggest piece of legislation.

In conclusion, every member is elected to serve all the people in their riding. That is not exclusive to just the government members, it's all members. Some members whom I have a great deal of respect for have been here for 20 years and more. They know the rules and they also have the highest respect for this place.

Mr Miclash: It's all right here. There's something about dictatorship.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kenora, I don't have to warn you again. Member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would never do as the member for Kenora is doing. It's one more example.

Times have changed and we must change our sitting orders. We're trying to parallel the rules with the federal Liberal government. We like to hear the words "harmon-

izing the standing orders." I think it makes very good sense.

Interjection: How about 20 opposition days?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The actual rules are very clear. You are not to interfere. You are not to interject.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kenora, I warn you. Member for Durham East.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate it, but the interruptions do make it difficult. I expect when the next speaker rises, we'll try to listen and respect the time they are given. I'm sure they'll have opposition points to make. After all, it is your duty to oppose us. I expect nothing positive; I expect all opposition.

I expect this government, in its wisdom, should listen and it should be fair and reasonable with the constituents we're all trying to represent. Just today our House leader, Mr Johnson, offered very clearly to the other House leaders to meet with them and to listen to them. What more could be expected?

Again, in the heat of this discussion, in conclusion, any remarks I may have made against another member, or suggested that their behaviour was unacceptable, were used only in the sincere gesture of trying to explain the need to reform the standing orders that are on the table today.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I certainly want to put something on the record. Earlier today the Premier of this province referred to the member for Scarborough North's sit-in during Bill 26 as some kind of fiasco. I know that all of my constituents, everybody I've talked to over the last two years about his role in Bill 26 and the opposition role in Bill 26, applauded it and said it was a strong and courageous stand for democracy that he took. I certainly want to put that on the record because no one agrees with the Premier or the previous speaker that it was anything but a courageous stand in defence of parliamentary privilege and in defence of the right to be heard and the right to have public meetings on that. So let's put that on the record about Bill 26.

I should also like to make it very clear that this government says, "We're going to adopt some of the federal rules."

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. My role here is to listen very attentively to what is being said, and if there are too many interjections, I cannot hear. So I would ask you, member for Lake Nipigon, to please stop interfering, stop interjecting; and the member for Kingston and The Islands and the member for Scarborough North. Member for Oakwood, you have the floor.

Mr Colle: In terms of the government saying, "We're trying to adopt some of the federal rules," it's interesting: There are three times the number of members of the Legislature in Ottawa. There are over 300. There are 103 here. Does that mean they want to triple the number of representatives? Does that mean they want a bicameral House here? As the member for Algoma said, what you have in Ottawa is three readings in the lower House, in Parliament, and then you have three more readings in the

Senate: twice the debate. Do you want to do that if you want to copy the Ottawa situation, the Ottawa scenario? Let's have the bicameral assembly here. Let's have the second sober thought.

Here we have a unicameral House, one House, and that is why it is so important to have checks and balances between the executive branch and the legislative branch because you only have one kick at the can here. There are no checks and balances. If these rules go through, in essence you're blending the executive branch and the legislative branch even more. You're creating a one-party government, a one-party Legislature. That is what these rules are designed to do.

I know members of the public might have time to go into these details, but in essence, if you look at the rules, they are all engineered out of the Premier's office to stifle debate, to basically get back at the opposition because the opposition had the audacity to question this government's steamroller. They got in the way of the steamroller Bill 26, where they made the most dramatic, draconian changes ever seen in this province's history. They tried to pass that bill through without any public hearings. That's what they tried to get away with. In fact, I was in this House when most of the members were in a lockup as a result of the budget, and when the House leader, Mr Johnson, presented it, he was about the only one here, with two or three other members, because the rest of the people were locked up. They tried to sneak the omnibus Bill 26 in while everybody was locked up. That was a real foreshadowing of what was to come.

Then with the megacity bill, again there was an anti-democratic denial of the rights of 400,000 people in the six cities of Metropolitan Toronto who said no, no, no to the taking away of their democratic rights. This government just went ahead, steamrolled it, rammed the thing through despite almost every deputant, except the Premier's chauffeur, who spoke in favour of the megacity. Despite that, they rammed the megacity down the throats of Ontarians and down the throats of people in Metropolitan Toronto.

That's what the opposition's job was. It stood in the way of the steamroller, and the opposition stands in the way of the steamroller for the public, because if you deny the opposition the right to debate, you deny the public the right to debate. If you deny the privileges and rights of the opposition, you deny the privileges and rights of the public. So I talk about this in terms of what it means to the public. It doesn't just mean something to those of us in this House. It means that our opportunity to raise questions about very complex bills is going to be diminished. They are going to be able, with these rule changes, to ram bills through in a week. How can the public ever have a chance to scrutinize, to question?

1710

Members of this Legislature for the last two years have been bludgeoned by this blitzkrieg from this government. Day after day it's new motions, new bills, new laws; it's endless. They've been going at an unprecedented, reckless rate of speed. Members of the Legislature — I've talked to veteran members like Mr Bradley from St Catharines — have never seen this kind of pace. If we can't keep up to all the bills and the hearings, how can

the public know what's in all these bills? If you look at all these bills, bill after bill that it is our duty to scrutinize, this government wants to move even faster, and I suspect they have a hidden motive for doing this. They have more anti-democratic, draconian bills on the back burner that the whiz kids are now crafting. They have more bills that will take away local democracy. They have more bills like Bill 26. As you know, they are proposing to take away the rights of workers to strike. That's one of the reasons they want to change the rules.

Talking about changing the rules, here is a government with a massive majority, in control of all the government departments. It's got these massive advertising campaigns on television with the Premier. For three or four months all we saw was the Premier on television, pulling wires on the screen, trying to promote himself. That's all at the government's disposal, and that isn't enough for this government. They want a supermajority. They don't want any opposition. They get very upset when the opposition questions them in question period, so they now want to move question period down to the end of the day so there won't be any television coverage or media coverage of question period. They would like to cancel question period, I'm sure, if they could get away with it.

That is, why when they introduced this motion, they introduced it through another sneaky, backhanded manner. On election day, when most Canadians were out voting, this government called a press conference introducing these draconian rule changes. That's when they did it, the same day that for the first time in 122 years this House had to sit on election day. That's what this government thinks of democracy. They tried to ram and sneak this thing through when most people were out voting and not watching.

Whenever they try to do something through the back door, they're trying to hide something, and that's what this motion is all about. It's an attempt by this government to continue to hide from the public what their intentions are in their bills, because they know when they railroad these bills through in a week, the average citizen is too busy trying to make a living or trying to make ends meet and will not have time to scrutinize the government.

That is why they want these rules, so that the opposition or the public or the press won't have an opportunity to question them. They do not like being questioned, they do not like being opposed, because when they won the election, they thought they bought the business. They think the province of Ontario belongs to them, the Conservative Party or whatever it is, the Reform-a-Tory party. I'm not sure what party it is, but they think they bought the province, and that is what these rules changes are all about. It's to ensure that it is run essentially like a closed-door, corporate shareholders' meeting where nobody dares question the CEO, the board of directors. They shouldn't be questioned; they rule by decree.

As you know, their own members agree with the public and the opposition. The member for Wentworth North, Tony Skarica, said, "It's a dictatorship." That was a Conservative saying that. You had Gary Carr, another Conservative, saying, "Mike Harris has got to realize this is still a democracy, not a dictatorship." These rule changes reinforce the perception a lot of Ontarians have that this

government is into total control. When the Premier muses about fingerprinting everybody in the province, you really start to wonder: What is the agenda? Why would he have to fingerprint everybody in the province?

Why would he have to always set up these unelected commissions and boards that you can't get at? For instance, they're closing down 30 hospitals in this province. It's not the Minister of Health who claims responsibility, or the Premier; they have this unelected, faceless group of mercenaries they call the Health Services Restructuring Commission that sells off our hospitals that belong to the people of Ontario. They do it behind closed doors with these unelected commissions, which further removes the public from the government.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Except for Ernie Eves.

Mr Colle: Oh, yes. Then there's Burk's Falls. There's a special situation for Burk's Falls. They get special consideration, but those of us who don't happen to be in the government don't get that special consideration.

That is what is so offensive about changing the rules to reinforce the continual power in the executive branch of this government. Even their own backbenchers, as I quoted, agree with that. There's too much power in Mike Harris's office. I think that's why they're complaining. I think the frustration of the member for Durham East was really about that, that they have nothing to do because everything is orchestrated from the back room by the whiz kids. They decide what they say, when they say it, where they go. Everything is decided by, as I said before with the commissions, unelected, appointed mercenaries that nobody sees. Who has ever seen this person Guy Giorno? Here's the guy making all the decisions around here. Who has ever seen this person? Is there such a person?

These are the power brokers. These are the people who are controlling our province, and as members of the opposition we try to do our best to raise questions. I know sometimes it's upsetting, the process is slowed down a bit, and sometimes there is a filibuster or there may be a sit-in, but this is the price of an open, democratic Legislature. If you don't have that give and take, if you don't have an opposition that is strong, the public is shut out, because the public can't hire lobbyists or lawyers to go and get meetings with Guy Giorno and all the backroom whiz kids. All the public has is essentially the opposition, and if you shut down the opposition, you close another door in the face of the public.

This government, for instance, uses closure as if it's routine. Every time there is a controversial bill, they invoke closure or, as they call it, time allocation. When closure was first introduced in 1956, with some fanfare, with the pipeline debate in Ottawa, it was almost a complete contradiction of Canadian parliamentary tradition, but now it's almost, as I said, part of everyday happenings in this Legislature. Every time there is a controversial bill or anybody raises any kind of opposition, oh, time allocation, closure. That means the public cannot find out about the bill. There's no debate, there's no time, and therefore the government steamrolls ahead.

In terms of where this government is going with these rule changes, over and over again we've been told that

this government has an agenda, and that was in the Common Sense Revolution. The problem is that many of the bills they're passing were not in their political agenda in the campaign. For instance, the creation of the mega-government in Chatham-Kent, the mega-government they're trying to create in Ottawa or Hamilton, the one they are trying to create in Toronto, these were not in the Common Sense Revolution. That is why the opposition had the support of the public in opposing those mega-governments: It wasn't in their platform. On the closing of hospitals, Mike Harris in the election said it wasn't his plan to close hospitals, so if they bring forth legislation to close hospitals, it's our duty to oppose it.

1720

We're not going to sit here quietly like trained seals and acquiesce to every document that comes through here. The public never voted for closing hospitals; the public never voted for megacities; the public never voted for this new tax system or the removal of rent controls, because the Tories, certainly in Metro Toronto, went door to door and said, "We're against market value assessment." The Tories went door to door and said: "We're against removing rent controls. We're in favour of improving rent controls." Now they've done the opposite.

You wonder why the public is upset. You wonder why the opposition is upset. They're doing the exact opposite of what they promised to do in the campaign. They never promised to get rid of rent controls; they're now in the middle of getting rid of rent controls. That is why the opposition has the right to be upset. That is why it is the opposition's right to raise these questions.

For this government to try and stifle that is basically an attempt to hide what it's up to. Why would they want to do things so quickly? Why would they introduce this motion to stifle the opposition on election day in the afternoon? Why wouldn't they introduce it in the middle of the day, when the public is watching? Because they were trying to hide the fact they're trying to do through the back door what they can't do through the front door.

I assure you the public will find out about this attempt to close down the opposition and muzzle the opposition and the public will not stand for it. They didn't support this government on Bill 26 because they saw that as being anti-democratic. That's why they supported Alvin Curling and supported the opposition on Bill 26, because the government had gone too far, they said, had taken too much power on to themselves. When governments go too far, that is when opposition can play a very important role. That's what we have to do.

Mr Speaker, I know you're a long-time soccer player and an athlete. You know that in competition you do not change the rules in the middle of the game. In other words, this government now feels itself under pressure. The polls are going down; the public has caught on to their act and is questioning them. So what do they want to do? "We're going to change the rules of the Legislature because we can't win by the old rules." It's as if at half-time at a soccer game, they change the rules because they couldn't win. With their massive majority, they were getting beat up by these ragamuffin little people in the opposition. They're going to change the rules because they weren't winning.

How fair is it for one side to change the rules and decide what the rules are going to be? That's what they're doing. They're going to decide, with their majority, what the rules of the game are going to be. That is not fair, it's not right and it's not done anywhere you have true parliamentary democracy. That is what they're going to do. They are going to go to the ultimate step of ensuring that the opposition will have less time to question, less time to debate.

That is what the rule changes will do. It will reduce our ability to debate, our ability to question, our ability to raise points of privilege even — even to limit that — and points of order. As the experienced members of this House will tell you and as you know yourself if you've been around here, it's very worrisome when one side decides what the rules are going to be. It goes contrary to the tradition of a House that is unicameral.

There's no Senate here that checks what Mike Harris does. Mike Harris and the cabinet control this province and there are no checks and balances. Is it the corporate sector that's going to check the Premier? How can the public check him when these bills are going to be rammed through within a week? There will be no opportunity for anyone to even have the resources or the parliamentary wherewithal to have any checks and balances on this government.

What we have is a shift — the Speaker said that in the Bill 103 hearings on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. He said, "What we see happening here is a shift towards an executive form of government, where most of the power is being shifted from the Legislature to the executive branch." That is not good for the members of the opposition, nor is it good for the backbenchers on the government side, who know, in all honesty, that they're just pawns in the games being played by the backroom people in the Premier's office. That is not healthy for Ontario and it's not healthy for the political process.

There is acrimonious debate and there are delays here. It's not very productive at times; it's not very efficient. Sometimes it even gets borderline manic in here. But you cannot run the Legislature like a business. It has to have its imperfections. It has to have its give and take. It has to have open participation. As much as you may dislike what the opposition is doing or saying, the opposition plays the role of a check and balance on the power of this government, especially a government with such a massive majority, a government with such massive resources, a government that has millions of dollars in its party's political coffers.

The opposition or the general public doesn't have those resources to oppose, so if you're a tenant and you're trying to oppose this government on rent control, how does you stand up to the government? You can't; it's almost impossible. If you're someone who believes that the city of East York should remain — you saw what happened. They voted in East York. Over 85% of the people of East York said no to eliminating their city and their borough. This government said: "We don't care what you say. We're going to do it anyway." If they've already done it before these rules are changed, why do they need even more power? Why do they need to shut down the opposition even more?

I'll read a passage from one of their own party kindred — maybe he's not any longer; I don't think he's a member of the Reform, but he certainly is a Progressive Conservative. It's Patrick Boyer's book on political rights. He talks about the right to free speech. That's what this issue is all about. It's a right to the freedom of speech of the opposition and the public. Here's what Patrick Boyer says, referring to an Alberta case in 1938:

"The Supreme Court of Canada stated that such institutions as Parliament 'derive their efficacy from the free public discussion of affairs, from criticism and answer and counter criticism, from attack upon policy and administration and defence and counter attack; from the freest and fullest analysis and examination, from every point of view, of political proposals.'"

That's what Patrick Boyer says. He goes on to say, "Even within its legal limits, it is liable to abuse, and grave abuse, and such abuse is constantly exemplified before our eyes; but it is axiomatic that the practice of this right of free public discussion of public affairs, notwithstanding its incidental mischiefs, is the breath of life for parliamentary institutions."

That's what we're talking about: the breath of life of parliamentary institutions. Sure, there's acrimony, sure, there's all kinds of mischief at times, but as Patrick Boyer says referring to these speeches from the past, you need this to have a good democracy. This is a true Progressive Conservative who has written a lot about how our institutions work and the public's right to have a say in how our institutions work.

If this government tries to control all aspects of this House to the point of depriving the opposition of points of privilege and orchestrating that, changing the whole routine of this House so there will be more ways of controlling spontaneity from the opposition, I think the public is a loser. The public is a loser if there isn't an opportunity to have an opposition that can undertake a filibuster now and then.

1730

I think filibusters are healthy. I think they're an integral part of slowing the process down so the public can stop and pay attention to what is before the Legislature. But if everything steamrolls ahead and everything is passed as if it's some production line, we're going to lose the very essence of what this Legislature is all about. This Legislature is about give and take, it's about hot debate, it's about confrontation at times, hopefully just verbal confrontation. You can't eliminate it. If you eliminate that, you in essence have a corporate type of government where people do what they're told — the opposition does what they're told, the government side does what they're told — and the only ones who win are the few privileged, unelected people in the back rooms and the members of the cabinet's inner circle. That is what these rule changes will do.

I know a lot of the public are saying perhaps we have to get these things in the House done in a way that is more expeditious and efficient, but I ask the public this: Maybe one of these laws doesn't affect your life. Maybe the rent control legislation doesn't affect your life or the megacity legislation doesn't affect your life or Bill 26 doesn't affect your life directly, but there will in the

future be a bill that this government will try to ram through that may affect your life, and you hope and pray to God that there's someone there fighting for you. Whether it's the press or members of an interest group or members of the opposition, you hope they're there to slow the thing down and ask: "Is this bill fair? Is this legislation for the good of Ontario? Does it make sense?"

As we saw with Bill 26, the government was forced to make over 130 amendments to that bill. That is the same bill this government wanted to push through without any hearings. It was probably the most dramatic change in governments we've ever seen in this province and they wanted to do it without hearings.

So you can see how important it is for everyone to support an effort by any group that wants to be heard, whether it be in a committee room or whether it be in this Legislature through an opposition question or opposition debate. If you take this away from us, if you take our ability to speak away from us, you've essentially taken the right of the people to speak away from them, because ordinary citizens don't have the time, perhaps sometimes don't have the information to be able to defend themselves. Sure, there are the well-to-do groups and individuals who may have the ability to speak on their own behalf and to petition the government, but all ordinary people really have is their elected representative at times, the opposition, to ensure that some piece of legislation doesn't destroy their life, doesn't close their hospitals in a wrongful way.

That's a perfect example of what can happen. The hospital restructuring commission that this government set up, that unelected body that's going to close hospitals — we asked for a hearing before that board, the members of the community who built Northwestern Hospital brick by brick, built it with their donations, with their voluntarism. This commission, appointed by Mike Harris, said: "No, we're not going to listen to you. We don't have to listen to you." Here's a hospital that is owned by the public, raised by volunteer funds. This government now has the audacity to say, "We don't even have to give you a hearing for an hour whereby you can plead for your hospital." I mean, if you get a traffic ticket, you can go before a JP and plead that traffic ticket.

This is why I fear these sledgehammer rule changes. They're anti-democratic sledgehammers which, under the guise of efficiency, are going to further dilute our ability to oppose, further dilute the public's ability to question this government. If there's a government that is afraid of questioning, it's a government that is trying to hide something. I ask the public out there to find out, why would this government want to have these extraordinary powers to shut down the opposition? With their huge majority, with all their money and the ministerial media people and their huge staffs of hundreds of people running all over the province, why would they want to have further control, a further shutdown of the opposition? Why would they want to keep this from the public? Why is the public not going to be given an opportunity to question through the opposition? What dangerous, draconian legislation are they, as I said, now planning in the back rooms?

That is why I think all of us will fight this set of rule changes right to the last minute. We're not going to give in to this.

Ms Martel: I rise today to participate in the debate which began yesterday, when the government House leader tabled the government notice of motion with respect to some very draconian rule changes that have been unilaterally presented to this House.

As I speak today, I'm going to frame my remarks in the following way: These draconian changes, which have been presented unilaterally, without notification to the other House leaders, without any discussion, without any negotiation, which just appeared on the order paper at 5 pm last Thursday night, are part and parcel of a broader government effort to do three things: first of all, to the best of its ability to ram through legislation in this House, especially controversial legislation; second, to try and shut down opposition members and any kind of opposing point of view which might be raised by people who were also duly elected to serve the Ontario public in this House; and third, as much as possible to shut out the public from the democratic process and from having any kind of influence whatsoever in the legislation or policy changes or the day-to-day workings of this government.

That's what these rule changes are all about. They reflect a much bigger government agenda to try and ram through legislation, to try and shut down opposition debate and opposing points of view at every step and to try and ensure that the public has very little, if any, kind of opportunity to have influence, to have input, to try and get the government to change its mind.

We know, having been in this House for the last two years and listening to the comments from members of the government, that the government doesn't like the democratic process, that this Legislature and the process by which we pass laws in this democratic Parliament are a nuisance to this government. Mike Harris would much rather run everything out of his office, as he has tried to do more and more in the last two years, without having any input not only from the opposition but from his own backbenchers. We know that because we have seen any number of backbenchers make very clear statements about the kind of leadership Mike Harris provides. You've got Toni Skarica, MPP, who says it's a dictatorship; Gary Carr, MPP, who says Mike Harris has got to realize this is still a democracy, not a dictatorship. Even some of the government's own backbenchers have publicly commented on the way this outfit is being run, which is directly out of Mike Harris's office.

We know that this government would prefer to have no debate on any pieces of legislation, especially the controversial ones. This government would be just as happy if we had no public input, no public hearings at any point, if the government could just come into this place every day and say, "Here's the legislation and this is the way it's going to be because we have a majority and we don't care what the rest of you have to say and we don't care that 50%-plus in this province voted against us and voted for members of two opposition parties."

It's clear by the comments that have been made in this House on occasion after occasion, by the attitude the government House leader takes in tabling the kinds of

changes that have been tabled, by some of the comments we heard earlier today from members of the government who talked about the group that was here and how awful it was that they had been here and what they had been up to; when the Minister of Labour yesterday or today described in this House the group of injured workers who were here yesterday as a "mob."

That's the kind of attitude with respect to public input and public debate that this group has demonstrated from the day it arrived here. "We don't want to hear an opposing point of view. We're the government. We're going to get on with the revolution. We don't care who we hurt, we don't care who we run over in the process, and we sure don't want to hear from the opposition in this place about some of the concerns other people have about what we're doing."

1740

What the government does instead, in dealing with legislation, in dealing with change, is to as much as possible deal in secret, behind closed doors, with some of its special friends.

We saw in Bill 99 that there was no kind of consultation whatsoever with injured workers' groups or legal clinics that represent injured workers or trade unionists who represent injured workers or MPPs, for example, who represent injured workers. There was no kind of input from those folks at all.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum in the House at present.

The Deputy Speaker: Would you please check if there is a quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sudbury East.

Ms Martel: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

It's been very clear from the way the government has operated to date in this place that they would be much, much happier if there were no debate; if the government could rule by decree; if the Premier or the ministers responsible could come in and tell us what the legislative changes were going to be and they would be implemented and there would be no public consultation and no public hearings. That is what some of these rules are designed to achieve. Let there be no mistake about it.

I said earlier that the rules are part and parcel of the government trying to shut down this place and shut out public input. Let's look at some of the other things the government has done to try and limit public input, limit public access to this place and limit public influence with respect to the democratic process.

One of the first things the government did was to cancel the tie line that the public who live outside of Toronto could use to contact either MPPs or government ministries. That tie line was a local number that could be called that would then connect that constituent to Queen's Park or to any number of government ministries or agencies of the government. In that way, people who lived outside of Toronto, in the long-distance calling area, like every single one of my constituents, could still have access to government and government ministries and not have to pay for that through Bell Canada. Those charges,

especially in the middle of a working day when you're trying to resolve some issue with government, can be expensive. One of the first acts of this government was to cancel that tie line, so the constituents who are trying to contact government ministries, government agencies, have to incur long-distance calling charges for that now. For a lot of people who are trying to resolve complex issues with government, which takes some time to do, that can be really expensive. They don't have that kind of money.

There was no reason to do something silly like that unless the government was not interested in allowing the public to have some access, allowing the public to try and resolve some of the issues and complaints it had against government. That's the only reason I can see for the government shutting down that service. It was to cut off public access, across a wide part of this province, to the people who work in this place and to government bureaucrats who work all through the metropolitan area.

Second, Hansard now will continue to be printed for MPPs, but will not be available for circulation by subscription to the general public. Unless members of the general public are fortunate enough to be able to afford a computer and to get into the Internet, they cannot get copies of what goes on in this place any more, either what goes on in this House or in committees of the House.

I ask the government, was it really that much of a saving that you thought you had to take away that service from members of the public who wanted to be informed about the debates happening in this place, who wanted to know what was happening in committees with respect to particular pieces of legislation? Was it that big a deal that you had to cut that particular opportunity people had? Now the only way you can access it, if you're not an MPP, is to hope you have Internet and access it that way.

Look at the centralization of government services back to Toronto and ask yourself if that isn't another concrete effort by this government to try and cut off the access to people to their government. Look at the example of the family support plan, which is the one I know best. In Sudbury there was a regional office and there were more than 60 people every day who accessed that service, from recipients who needed their payments to employers who were trying to sort out support deduction notices, to payors who were trying to make arrangements to provide cheques up front that could be delivered to their families, to any number of social service agencies that have to deal with the family support plan for seasonal orders and other things.

What did this government do last August? The government decided that to cut some costs, and frankly to cut off people's access to this plan, they were going to centralize everything back to Downsview. All the regional offices across the province, the one in my community and the 10 others, were shut down by this government. The Attorney General said at the time, "Only 60 people on average every day were using this service." I don't care because they were 60 people who used the service and got their problem resolved, and now these people can't get through on the phone line to the

family support plan even to have someone talk to them about their problem, much less get it resolved.

It was another concrete example of this government trying to shut down access of the public to a government service, to government bureaucrats, for people who were trying to get help to resolve their particular concern with this government. It was a wrong thing to do, and the government did that not only with the family support plan but is doing that now with any number of other ministries, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines included.

This government has moved to use voice mail almost exclusively. I don't know how many people actually try to call government bureaucrats to deal with problems of their constituents, but two weeks ago, when I was up during constituency week and doing a lot of that, there wasn't a single ministry I could get through to to talk to a live body on the first try. Not a single one. What is that? That's only an example of this government trying to put people off, trying to make sure they don't call back: Don't return their calls and hopefully they won't try again. What kind of access is that for people in Ontario who pay for that service, who pay to ensure that services and bureaucrats are accessible. Again, this government is trying to cut off access, is trying to cut off the public's input into what's happening in this place.

Let's look at some of the time frames for consultation on government legislation and how the government does everything in its power to try and ensure that the public has no say into what it's doing. Let's look at the example from the Minister of Education and Training, who put out his document on suggested changes at the secondary school level with respect to curriculum and structure. We heard from any number of parent and school councils that the time frame that was permitted to make recommendations back to the government was so short that it was impossible for them to even bring their parent and school councils together to take a serious look at the changes and to provide concrete and good recommendations back to government. The Minister of Education and Training had no desire, no intention whatsoever, to hear from the public. It was clear, from the very short time frame that he allowed for alleged public input, that he couldn't have cared less what the public had to say, what school councils had to say, what parents and students had to say. The whole way in which the discussion was framed made it clear to the school councils in my community that the government had no interest whatsoever in hearing what they had to say.

1750

The Ministry of Natural Resources did the same thing six months ago in a piece of legislation it was developing. The groups which contacted me got a copy of the discussion paper on a Thursday and were invited to a briefing session and to make their comments and recommendations for change on it the next Tuesday here in Toronto. It was clear to those groups that the minister had no intention whatsoever of listening to what they had to say, that he couldn't have cared less what they had to say. The very way in which the discussion paper was structured, in which the request for input was structured, made it clear to them that the government didn't want to

hear from them, didn't want to know, was going to proceed in exactly the way the government intended in the discussion paper it set out.

Those are more concrete examples of this government trying to do whatever it can to block public input, to block public access to government, to do whatever it can to ensure that the public has no say and the government goes on its merry way day after day doing whatever it wants.

Just take a look at some of the public hearings — or lack of public hearings — on some major pieces of legislation around this place and people will understand that the public is being left out with respect to very controversial changes in the way society is structured in Ontario and that MPPs are being left out, not having an opportunity to have their say.

This government made dramatic changes to labour legislation through Bill 7, took us back 50 years in terms of the rights workers had won in workplaces in this province. There wasn't a single day of public consultation on those dramatic and draconian changes that took workers back 50 years in terms of the rights they had fought for, won and enjoyed in this province — not one single day, not an hour of public consultation on a bill that dramatically changed the balance we had achieved in the workplace, on a bill that dramatically influenced and undermined rights people had fought long and hard to achieve.

Take a look at the changes around public libraries. There was a single day, one single day of public hearings in Toronto on that piece of legislation, despite the many requests received by the committee from people who cared about their community libraries, their public libraries, who wanted to have input, who wanted to be able to talk to government directly about their experience and share that with the government.

The government agreed to one single day of public hearings. When our committee members moved a motion to extend that, the government members voted it down. The government was not interested in hearing what people had to say. The government had formed its conclusion about what it wanted to do, had its direction and couldn't care less what the public had to say and didn't want to hear any other suggestions about how changes could be made.

Look at Bill 26. This government did not want any public hearings on Bill 26. That was clearly identified by the government House leader even before the legislation was introduced in this House when the government House leader told the opposition House leaders, "I want this introduced, second reading and third reading rammed through before Christmas." Yes, the opposition did whatever it could to stop that and did what was necessary to ensure we had public hearings, because that bill provides such sweeping changes to the structure of health care, to municipal structures, to pay equity, to changes with respect to natural resources, that the public needed and had to have some kind of input. But I can tell you that this government didn't want that. The government House leader wanted that thing rammed through as fast as he could before last Christmas.

It was only because the opposition used the rules of this House, a particular rule the government is now going to change in the government motion, that we were able to get some hearings, and then the government itself had to bring in 100-plus amendments to fix the mess it had created. Were it not for those public hearings, were it not for people taking a sober second look at that bill, and by that I mean the government itself and any number of government ministers who had different pieces of legislation attached to that bill, there would not have been about 100-plus amendments and there would not have been some little bit of positive change to some of the sections of that bill.

That's why you need public input. That's why you need public hearings. That's why the government can't put forward the rule it wants to, which will then say members can't stop the House in the way they did in the face of very draconian measures this government was moving on during Bill 26.

Let me give you an example of Bill 99, the workers' compensation legislation that began yesterday down in committee. There has been a long tradition in this House that when governments make changes to workers' compensation legislation, governments put in place proper public hearings so that injured workers and their representatives can come and have their say, because when you change workers' comp you affect the lives of literally thousands and thousands of workers and their families across this province.

What does this government do? In a time allocation motion moved by the government House leader, the Conservative government decided they didn't care about that tradition, didn't care about having input from workers or hearing from their representatives. The government was going to have its way and have four half-days of hearings here in Toronto and six days on the road. That's the beginning and the end of the public hearing process on Bill 99, a bill which significantly changes workers' compensation in a way we have not seen in this Legislature since the act was first adopted in 1914.

I was in the resources committee last week trying to argue for extended hearings, trying to point out to the government members that every time we have had significant workers' compensation change in this province, we have allowed for extensive hearings and extensive travel. We have allowed injured workers to come and, for a single day, have their say, as they did at Convocation Hall when the Liberals last tried to significantly change workers' compensation. We argued before that committee that unless the government had some hearings, injured workers and their reps would see very clearly that the government bill was what it was going to be; that there were going to be no amendments, no changes, no alterations, and whatever they came to say just wouldn't matter.

By the mere fact of the government members voting down the resolution that the NDP put forward, which was to extend the hearing time to make sure that some of the 1,200 people who had already applied for standing even before the notice went out would at least have their say, under the rule that was brought down by this government

and voted in favour of by the government backbenchers, perhaps 122 groups at the end of the day will have a chance to comment on this bill — 122 out of 1,200 who applied before notice was even given.

With respect to notice, it's very clear that the government doesn't want the public to know what's going on, doesn't want to have the public have their say. On Bill 99, the government initially agreed to have notice go out only on the government networks — didn't want to advertise in the paper, didn't want to let people know what was happening. When we argued against that, the government agreed there would be some notification in those communities outside of Toronto but no notification in the papers in Toronto, because the fact is that there wasn't enough time to notify people before the selection of the deputants even occurred because the government had to have this bill start this week. There wasn't even public notice to people in Metro about this bill and an opportunity to appear before the committee because this government, in a week's time, had to choose the deputants and had to get the bill under way. It was that rushed.

The government doesn't want to hear from people and the government wants to ram through its legislation, and nowhere is that more clear than in Bill 99 and the horrible process that's going on right now. It's no wonder that injured workers came yesterday to protest about that. I was appalled to hear the Minister of Labour of this province, in this House today, stand up and call those people a mob. I was appalled and I was disgusted that that is her reaction to people who have been hurt on the job in this province, making a positive contribution to the economy, building that society. That's what she thinks about injured workers. It's clear that in her comments she reflects the feeling of this whole government with respect to injured workers.

1800

If you look at the changes that are before us, there are a couple of things that are clear. As much as I like the member for Nepean — he's a nice fellow — no one on this side believes for one single second that he is the author of these changes and that this somehow was the brainchild of the member for Nepean or the brainchild of the Tory caucus.

Look, folks, this thing was orchestrated, directed, developed, put together in the Premier's office. Then someone in the Premier's office called the member for Nepean and said, "Boy, have we got a job for you." He was duped into doing this. I don't know why that happened. It makes it seem as if he is a puppet for the Premier. I'm sure the member for Nepean does not want to be known as a puppet for the Premier.

There's no other way I can describe it; there's no better way I can describe it. The fact is that no one believes that the member for Nepean, all of his own accord, at 11 o'clock on election day held a press conference and decided to put forward all the rules he and some backbenchers in his caucus decided they wanted to bring forward. I don't believe it.

I have to think that the Premier's office just wants more power and more control and wants everything to be run out of that office regardless of what the back bench

is saying, frankly regardless of what cabinet is saying some days. The direction, the development, the orchestration of the whole thing came out of the Premier's office, and the member for Nepean is the front person for what is happening. I just don't buy that argument.

What I find more appalling is the way this was done. It was so different from and so contrary to the way in which rule changes have traditionally been developed in this place. For goodness' sake, at any other point in time when rule changes have been discussed there has been some discussion with the House leaders of the opposition parties. The House leaders of the opposition parties have seen the proposed changes. The House leaders for the other parties have had a chance to sit down with the government House leader and negotiate the package of changes that will occur.

What we've had happen here in this case is that the government at 5 pm last week put these changes on the order paper, we had not seen them before, we began to debate them on Monday and there has been no discussion. The government House leader has said, "There's lots of time to discuss; let's negotiate." Why doesn't he say, "Let's negotiate with a gun to your head"? That's the situation we find ourselves in. The changes are on the order paper. We're debating them. Someone has to explain to me what room there is for negotiation when that's the position we find ourselves in today at 6:05 pm.

It's interesting that the government House leader in his remarks talked about the House of Commons. He cherry-picked those rule changes from the House of Commons which limit either the participation or the debate time or the opportunity for opposition members to have a role in the House of Commons.

If you look at the debate time alone the government House leader wants to apply here in Ontario, it's very clear that we're going to go from leadoffs which are now 90 minutes down to 40, and individual members speaking from half an hour to 20 minutes. The government House leader justifies that because he says that's the rule in Ottawa. There are 300-plus MPs in Ottawa too. Maybe that's part of the reason for the difference.

What is interesting is that the government House leader didn't move, for example, a rule change around opposition days. In the House of Commons the opposition has 20 opposition days they can use in a calendar year compared to the ones we have here. But the government House leader didn't move that particular rule change in the package he brought forward. I'd argue he didn't bring forward much that was terribly positive about the rules in Ottawa. He looked at the ones which would limit debate, limit participation of opposition members, and those are the ones he wishes to apply in Ontario. He justifies that application by saying, "If it's good enough in the House of Commons, surely to goodness it must be good enough here in Ontario."

It is not. This is a different Parliament, we have a different number of members, we have substantially different issues that we deal with in this House versus the federal House, and the changes we are going to deal with are negotiated between the House leaders and don't just appear as a fait accompli, which they have in this case.

The House leader for our party talked earlier about some of the comments the former House leader for the Conservative Party made when he sat on this side of the House and talked about how changes have to be made. I won't repeat those, but I will reinforce them in the following way to the government members: You can change the rules any way you want, and you're going to, because the gun is to our heads and there's no doubt before we're finished in this session, at least to my mind, some of these, if not all of them, are going to be implemented. But the next day we will be looking at ways to circumvent them and to thwart them and to get around them and to still have a way, as opposition members, to participate fully in this place.

We have a responsibility to do that. We too were elected in a democratic process and we too have a right

to represent the views of our constituents in this place without having the changes you want to bring on us so shackle us that we have no opportunity to participate any more.

If the government proceeds in the way it wants to proceed, as is clearly evident by the fact that this was tabled and that we are debating it and there has been no negotiation to date, then I can only say to the government that the prophecy of Mr Eves from Parry Sound, when he was House leader, will come true: There will be no trust among government House leaders, there will be no trust among members of the parties, and this place will fall apart completely. It will not operate, it will not function, and no one in this province will be better served if that's where we end up.

Report continues in volume B.

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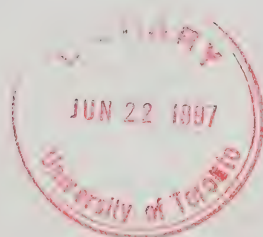
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**Journal
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Tuesday 17 June 1997

Mardi 17 juin 1997



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 June 1997

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 juin 1997

Report continued from volume A.

1807

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Continuation of debate on the motion for adoption of amendments to the standing orders.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak on this very important motion. I bring perhaps a different perspective from a good number of my colleagues who have already spoken. I am a new member, elected just two years ago, and I look at the practices that are operated in this place and compare them to other jurisdictions and the House of Commons, which is in the same region as my constituency, where I had the opportunity to work for four or five years. I look at the way my city council in Nepean and the regional council in Ottawa-Carleton operate. I see there is certainly a marked difference in the way this place operates.

I want to speak particularly about the process. Some number of months ago I spoke with the government House leader and expressed to him the interest I had in the standing orders, and the frustrations not only I had but a good number of my colleagues on the back benches of the government had, and told him I was interested in looking into the potential to increase the democracy of this place for backbenchers particularly. The House leader invited me and said, "Go to it and come up with some ideas, some recommendations."

I had the opportunity of consulting with a good number of people and getting advice and counsel. I had the opportunity to speak to the Clerk and the assistant clerk. I was able to meet on more than one occasion with legislative research and with officials at the library here at the Legislature. I drew from my own experiences working at the House of Commons in Ottawa, and from the federal standing orders, of course, which work very well in the House of Commons. People come from around the Commonwealth to look at how the Parliament in Ottawa operates, one of the most democratic institutions in the world, and many of the changes I found were contained right here in the federal standing orders.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You are a puppet of the Premier's office. Why don't you admit it?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Member for Cochrane South, come to order.

Mr Baird: I'll quote the member for Cochrane South in a minute. I've got some good quotes from him.

I also consulted my caucus colleagues and staff here at Queen's Park and presented some ideas and suggestions in terms of what would be good to try to increase democracy for backbenchers, increase the role of individ-

ual members in this place. On that process, it's funny, even the Toronto Star, which expressed some concerns and some objections to the changes, said in an editorial on June 11, "To their credit, the Tories have floated their proposals before forcing them on the Legislature; they should learn from their predecessors' mistakes" and investigate these changes. But they gave the government credit for floating these changes, for sending them out to the House leaders and to all members of this House to get their feedback before they tabled the motion we're debating here today. I think that's very important.

My proposals that I tabled to all members of the House and the motion brought forward by the government House leader do absolutely nothing to cut back the amount of debate on legislation, absolutely nothing. In fact, they do the exact opposite. They propose to allow more members more opportunities to speak and to represent their constituents. What could be more democratic?

This motion strengthens the democratic rights of individual members to debate and vote on the budget, something that has only happened in three of the last 10 years. Members have a right to vote on the budget, I believe.

The members would have the right to have their private members' bills voted on. The current undemocratic practice allows 12 members to block a vote. This rule has been used 82 times in the last number of years since it was introduced; only once in this Parliament when it was used by the opposition. Generally it's used by the government. Under the Davis years it was used by the government. I think that's wrong and that's why I recommended changing these.

The proposals would enjoy more debate by permitting the House to sit more than four and a half hours a day and allow the House to sit more than 20 hours a week. That's hardly revolutionary, to sit more than 20 hours a week. Back in Nepean, they would think that an eight-hour day would be something most hardworking taxpayers have to work.

The proposals would also allow for more debate by allowing the House to sit for more than 25 weeks a year, cutting short MPP breaks to deal with the public business. We're looking at a very important piece of legislation in committee just downstairs, the truck safety bill, which gets tough on drunk drivers. These proposals would allow more opportunity for debate in this place.

The proposals would also allow more time to debate private members' bills at third reading. Currently, they compete with government orders and with opposition day motions. The excuses will run out because there will certainly be more opportunities for debate on private members' bills. That's something that's very important.

Ontario is not the only place where backbenchers are speaking up and trying to get more roles, more speaking

time. I noticed in the *Globe and Mail* yesterday: "Backbenchers Raise Their Voices." In Alberta, backbenchers, as they are here in Ontario, are pushing for a greater role and that's something I was pleased to see.

Another important thing to mention is that most of these —

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): On a point of order, Madam Chair: There isn't a quorum and I think their members should be here to listen to this member.

The Acting Speaker: Clerk, is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: It's funny, when the member for St Catharines calls this the most important issue we're debating, there are only two members of the opposition in the House. Isn't that amazing, Madam Speaker? Only two members in the House. The most important piece of business this House will consider and twice during this debate there have been no members of the Liberal Party present because they've got more important things to do. It's very shocking that they wouldn't be here in the House wanting to debate the important, salient political issues of the day.

As I was saying, most of the proposals brought forward in this motion simply adopt the procedures and the practices of the House of Commons, the standing orders they use in Ottawa, the standing orders that M. Chrétien, M. Martin use to conduct business in Ottawa. As I said earlier, that is one of the most democratic institutions in the parliamentary world. In fact, people regularly, every summer, travel from around the world to come to Ottawa, not just for the great tourism, but to learn more about the parliamentary practices in the House of Commons in Ottawa.

It's important to look at what people who are now in government said when they were in opposition. One member in 1989 said, "We have lagged behind as the federal House and other provincial Houses have moved on to bring in changes." Do you know who said that? The member for Nipissing, the then House leader of the third party, said that, and he says the same thing now.

What did Mr Cooke, the House leader of the New Democratic Party, say? In 1992 he said, "We're proceeding with parliamentary reform which will finally bring the Ontario Legislature in line with other legislatures in Canada and the House of Commons."

Ah, here's a good one. This is a very good one: "Every Legislature in Canada and the federal House of Commons have similar rules. They have similar rules because they have recognized that you have to have a process to allow the Legislature to do its business, to allow the legislation to go through the House. But more important, it's to allow full participation on the part of all members," talking about why the Ontario Legislature would want to adopt the federal standing orders. Do you know who said that? My good friend the member for Cochrane South said that, and I agree with him. He was right when he said it. I know the member for Cochrane South will want to repeat that later in the debate, since

the government is following through with the things he proposed when he was a government backbencher and I know Mr Bisson will want to say the same thing in opposition that he did in government.

The proposals before the House allow for more debate. What could be more democratic than allowing for more debate? Under these proposals more members will have the opportunity to speak. These proposals simply mirror those of the House of Commons in terms of speaking time, exact mirroring, like M. Bisson said was the right thing to do.

Right now, only the first three members can speak for 90 minutes. We normally debate a bill for three days and in that three days we would consider the bill for approximately seven and a half hours. What we see is that the first three speakers get four and a half of the seven and a half hours of debate. These proposals will allow for more democracy, more debate. More backbenchers, particularly those in the government since there are more of them, but also backbenchers in the third party and the official opposition, will have the opportunity to speak. What could be more democratic than allowing more backbenchers and more members to participate in debate? Absolutely nothing. That's the way Mr Chrétien operates things in Ottawa, the most democratic of parliaments in the world. That is very, very important.

Some members have said, "Could you make your point in 20 minutes?" I heard the House leader of the New Democratic Party ask that. I thought, "Let's consult the experts." One of my good colleagues on the other side had this to say in the debate when the standing order changes were brought in under the New Democratic Party. He said, "If you can't come to your point in 20 minutes, you have a real problem." Do you know who said that on June 22, 1992? My good friend the member for Cochrane South, Mr Bisson. He said it. I want to tell you, I agree with the member for Cochrane South. He was very wise when he made that statement. That is very important.

I want to come back now to process, the process connected to this. These proposals were released publicly. They were on the CBC, they were on Global, they were on CBC television, it was in the *Globe and Mail*, it was in *Southam*, it was in the *Sun* — and that was somehow sneaking them in, sneaking them in at a press conference with 15 journalists present. That's the way to sneak things in.

One of the things we did two weeks ago yesterday was that we sent a letter to all MPPs inviting them to make submissions — consulting — to contribute to the debate.

Interjection: Who did?

Mr Baird: I did. I invited members to submit information on the process. I want to thank the member for Elgin, Peter North. He came forward with some suggestions to the proposal and he spoke to me of his concern as an independent member. It was interesting; having served in this House for two years, I can't recall if I'd ever met the member for Elgin. He came forward to bring forward some suggestions. I'm glad my colleagues the member for Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and East Grenville and the member for Carleton, who was in the chamber this afternoon, are here. Mr North came forward

and said, "Listen, there was a report done by the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly in 1993 on the role of the independent member, right here." This report was researched, a good number of members from all parties sat on it, and it's been gathering dust at the legislative library since November 24, 1993. It has been gathering dust because it was never acted upon. Mr North brought this forward, and I am very pleased to see the government House leader accept all the recommendations Mr North brought forward, not some of them but all of them. We wanted to allow a greater role for backbenchers, a greater role for individual members of provincial Parliament. What they did was adopt all the proposals he came forward with.

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I think we should recognize the role that a good number of members played. Members Ron Hansen and Paul Wessinger vice-chaired this committee, and my colleagues Noble Villeneuve and Norm Sterling chaired the committee. Also on the committee was Gilles Morin, the member for Carleton East. He attended committees and participated in this process.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I would think the government members, given that they're pushing forward these rule changes, would all be here to listen to this speech, yet I notice we don't have quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nepean.

Mr Baird: As I was saying about wanting to strengthen the role of democratic debate by giving more time and a greater role for an individual MPP, Mr North, the independent member for Elgin, came forward with this report which had been gathering dust for four or five years and brought it forward.

What did the issues contained in this report deal with? They dealt with question period. In the standing orders, the Speaker is not allowed to recognize an independent member for question period. The member for Elgin told me that when he first became an independent member the then Speaker would not allow him to ask questions at all, none. It just wasn't allowed. You couldn't allow an independent member to ask a question.

The next Speaker, Speaker McLean, on occasion did allow him to ask a question. Very fortunately for the member for Elgin, the current Speaker, Speaker Stockwell, does allow him from time to time to ask questions. But there is no provision in the standing orders. Mr North, the member for Elgin, is completely at the whim of the Speaker of the day. The Speaker now is good, but previous Speakers have been less than generous in giving him time.

In terms of committee membership, right now the member for Elgin isn't allowed to formally sit on any committee of this place, isn't allowed to move an amendment in committee whatsoever. I think that is wrong. He's not allowed to speak but on rare occasion in this chamber on members' statements. He's not allowed to give a member's statement. Every Thursday morning,

when we have two private member's hours, he's not allowed to participate. He has suffered as a result.

I think it's not an insult to the member for Elgin; it's an insult to the people of Elgin, who elected him to be their representative here in this place. I think it's time the rules in this place recognized the contribution he should be allowed to make in this place. The rule changes suggested in the motion do allow a greater role for an independent member, and that is all part of the process of trying to give individual MPPs, particularly backbenchers, a greater role.

The ministers get their opportunity to speak. The front bench of the opposition, the former ministers who sit on that side of the House, get their 90-minute speaking times, and they don't have a problem. But we backbenchers want more time to speak, we want more time to democratically express the concerns of our constituents. That's very important.

I want to thank the member for Elgin for bringing these proposals forward. He brought them forward with an independent, non-partisan perspective, and I'm pleased to see the government adopt the entire substance of the report and put it in the standing orders so it will increase the way he's allowed to participate. In the House in the previous Parliament, there were three independent members. We have a few by-elections, and you never know; we could elect a few more. This will give a strengthened role to independent members in this House.

Another very important provision in this motion has to do with the ability of individual MPPs to hold the government of the day accountable. Probably the single most important document that we discuss and that is tabled in this chamber, normally once every year, is the provincial budget. It sets the spending of the government for the coming year; it sets the monetary policy; it sets how we'll deal with the \$100-billion debt left by the three governments who preceded us; it deals with how we'll seek to create jobs. The budget is probably the single biggest determinant of what the economy in Ontario will be of any single government bill tabled here.

The importance of the budget and job creation — here we have the Nepean Clarion: "5,000 Jobs Coming to the City of Nepean: Nortel Announces \$250-Million Expansion."

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You had nothing to do with that, John.

Mr Baird: The government of Ontario did not, you're right; the hardworking people at Nortel did. The thousands of employees at Nortel are responsible for that expansion. The government of Ontario offered no grants. The people at Nortel did it themselves, and the people in Nepean are very privileged to have such a hardworking group of men and women in our community.

Getting back to the budget, I checked the record, Madam Speaker, and would you believe — you will be genuinely shocked by this, I know, a hardworking legislator like yourself — in this chamber in the last 10 years, there has only been a vote on the provincial budget three times. Three times in 10 years on the most important document contained in the binder of bills. I think that is just shocking and appalling.

The most effective way an individual MPP could hold the government of the day accountable is on the budget vote. I looked at what was done in the federal Parliament, under the federal standing orders; I looked at how individual MPs are able to hold the government of the day accountable in Ottawa because they can vote on the budget.

I checked first and foremost the member for York South-Weston. Mr Nunziata, a government backbencher, had the opportunity to stand in his place and vote against the budget because he firmly believed it was against every single thing he had campaigned on. He firmly believed that Mr Chrétien had said, "We will abolish, we will quash, we will get rid of the GST." He wanted to represent his constituents and he had the opportunity to stand in his place in Ottawa, at the opposite end from the Speaker on the front bench, and vote against the budget.

That single act caused a national debate on the federal Liberals not keeping their election promises. Would you know, within weeks of him voting against the federal budget, he was instrumental in seeing the resignation of the second-highest politician in the land. The Deputy Prime Minister of Canada had to resign because the member for York South-Weston held the government of the day accountable.

In Ontario that wouldn't have been possible 70% of the time, because under all three parties — this is a non-partisan issue — under the Liberals, under the Conservatives, under the New Democratic Party, there hasn't always been a vote on the budget. I think that's regrettable. These standing orders changes would require a vote, would allow for more debate during the budget debate and would force the government of the day to bring a vote on the budget.

That's incredibly important for democracy, for more accountability. What could be more democratic than ensuring that the Legislative Assembly, the people's representatives, have the opportunity to pass judgement on the overall financial direction of the government? That's very important. I think most Ontarians, most people in Nepean or Riverdale, Madam Speaker, would be very surprised to learn that in 70% of the last 10 years there has not been a vote on the budget. This changes that and I'm very proud of that. That was something I felt very strongly about when I looked at the standing orders.

I look at another important democratic reform to give a greater role to backbenchers and to give more democracy and more debate. This is the issue of blocking votes. We saw a shameful exercise last year in this chamber.

1830

The public may not know that the Ontario Legislature has a very good system for considering private members' bills on second reading. Every Thursday morning we consider two bills. As the member for Nepean, I regularly vote for New Democratic Party bills and resolutions. I think I voted for an environmental resolution brought forward by the member for Riverdale because I thought that's what folks in Nepean would want their representative to do. I voted for an issue on health care that a Liberal member from Windsor brought forward with respect to the Canada Health Act. So I regularly vote for opposition bills.

What happens on that is that just before there's a vote, the Speaker will ask the House, and there's a calm quiet in the House, "Are there any members who object to a vote?" He did that one day and members objected to a vote. Democracy ended. Bill 33 was cut dead in its tracks. Central to democracy is allowing a member not just to introduce a bill so it can be considered in this chamber, central to democracy is not only allowing for debate at second reading, but central to democracy is to allow a vote, an expression of a decision.

I was reading Hansard with respect to the changes on this and I came across a very good quote from one of my colleagues: "Surely the emphasis must be on debate, on decision." That was said in this chamber on July 25, 1989, by the member for Renfrew North. I would agree that making a decision is central to —

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): He's a Tory?

Mr Baird: No, he's a Liberal member.

Mr Grimmett: You're kidding.

Mr Baird: He's the Liberal member for Renfrew North, and he was the government House leader at the time. That Liberal member said a decision is important. I agree with that because democracy is introduction, it's debate and it's also coming to a decision.

I'd only seen one example where the opposition had denied a vote, on Bill 33. I looked at what had been done in previous years and I found that rule had been used 81 other times. It was normally used, would you believe, by the government to stop an opposition bill or an opposition member. I was very saddened to learn that, even by governments of my own party.

But I bring a fresh perspective to this place — I wasn't here at Queen's Park during the previous Tory years — and I think we want a more democratic system. Let's scrap the section and let's always allow a vote on a private member's bill at second reading. Let's always allow a vote on a private member's resolution. Let's always allow the members of this place to pass judgement on that bill and get it sent to committee, where it could be debated more, where we could have more debate, and then get it sent back to the House on third reading to have more debate.

What we're saying is, let's scrap the vote-blocking clause. Let's allow more debate at committee. Let's allow more debate in the House. Let's allow more members to discuss it. What could be more democratic for individual MPPs but to have their own private members' bills voted on?

I talked to some of my colleagues and they've even been afraid about tabling certain pieces of legislation because if you get some members of the opposition on a bad day, they may block a vote just because they don't like it, and I think that's wrong. It's not democratic, and I'm pleased to see that change contained in this resolution.

Another proposal which allows for more debate: Right now, the Ontario Legislature is normally supposed to sit 25 weeks per year and it only has to sit four days a week, 20 hours a week. I know members work: They work in committee, they work in their ridings. I know most members of this place on all sides are hardworking people.

Certainly the New Democratic and Liberal members are just as hardworking as the government members.

What the changes proposed in this motion would do is allow for more debate, allow for greater length, allow for us to sit three hours in the evening to consider perhaps a private member's bill on third reading which right now competes with a government bill. That's something I think is very important. The good news is that would allow for more members to speak, and with the speaking times we'll be able to hear from more members. I think there's a good number of my colleagues on this side — I drive five, five and a half hours on Monday morning to get to this place. I hear the same members speak for 90 minutes on every bill or 45 minutes on every bill, and then too often government members and the opposition backbenchers are denied the opportunity to speak because the same member goes on for 90 minutes, rarely keeps to the subject —

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Baird: There are members who speak on every bill, and if they keep to the subject for 5% of the time, I would be shocked, absolutely shocked. Again, "If you can't come to your point in 20 minutes, you have a real problem." M. Bisson, the member for Cochrane South. I agree with him. The NDP member for Cochrane South said that, and I agree with him. I know him to be an honourable person and I know he'll repeat that in his remarks later because he is an honourable member.

We currently are one of the only places in the world that have to debate whether you want to work late. On occasion I have to ask my staff, if we're working on some problems dealing with a constituent: "Would you be willing to work two or three hours late tonight? Would you be willing to work late to get this project done for a constituent? Would you be able to work late on that?"

My staff and hardworking taxpayers across Ontario don't have the right to debate for two days whether they want to work a couple of hours late one day. They decide whether they want to work or they don't. These proposals would make it easier for more debate, easier for more members to have the opportunity to speak, and that's something that's very, very important.

As well, if there's an important issue of public policy that's of concern to the hardworking taxpayers of Ontario, it would allow the Legislature to be called back, to say, "Listen, there's an important public policy issue that merits attention in this place, that merits public discussion and debate." It stops circumstances like we saw in December where we debated for two full days whether we would work an extra week. We spent two full days debating whether we would sit an extra four days in December. Instead of adjourning the House for the Christmas holidays on December 13, the government House leader suggested that we sit till December 19 and we spent two days debating whether we'd work for four days. That's terribly inefficient, terribly unproductive. If you look at the cost of running this place, to sit and debate whether you should work late is not a productive use of the taxpayers' money. It's not a productive use of our time if we want to address the many challenges and problems affecting the province and to deal with them.

I want to conclude by saying a good number of the changes brought forward in this legislation are simply those of the standing order. But my good friend the member for Sudbury East said, "Did the member for Nepean really write all these changes?" I have a confession. The member for Nepean didn't write them all. Some of them were in fact written by Ms Martel, the member for Sudbury East. Some of them were written in a motion that she tabled in this House on May 28, 1991. This was tabled in the House and many of these changes are directly from Ms Martel's suggestions. I want to publicly thank her for all the time and effort she spent in the 1990s.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): What party is she in?

Mr Baird: The member for Kitchener asked what party. She's a New Democratic member of this House. She brought forward these suggestions, these proposals, and I don't think anyone —

Mr Bisson: Haven't you figured that out yet? Government House leaders love this stuff.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Cochrane South, come to order.

Mr Baird: I don't think anyone in the New Democratic Party would have called Ms Martel's changes draconian or anything but fair and reasonable, because like the Baird proposals or the Johnson motion, many of Ms Martel's suggestions simply adopt the House of Commons rules. That's something that's very important to recognize.

I encourage all members of this House to support this motion. It allows for more backbenchers, more members, to debate legislation. We'll get more debate, not less: more debate, more democracy, more opportunity for backbenchers and individual MPPs to have the opportunity. I say to those members of the House who perhaps might have served in the cabinet in previous governments and those members who serve in the cabinet today to allow more backbenchers the opportunity to speak. We want the opportunity to speak as much as you do. We want the opportunity to participate in this debate, to represent our constituents, to come here and express and to participate in the debate. We want our say too.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): I'm grateful that I have the privilege and the right to participate in this debate. It is because my rights and privileges as a member of the opposition are threatened that I rise today. I feel I must express my serious opposition both to the rule changes that this government has brought forward and the method it has used to do so.

Quite honestly, I don't think this is a matter that the general public pays much attention to. For that reason, it is even more crucial that the public understand the importance of the tools of democracy. A strong and effective opposition is absolutely essential to the proper functioning of that democracy. Without opposition, democracy cannot exist. In this country we have the luxury of taking democracy for granted, believing that nothing can threaten our freedoms. In that case, apathy becomes our greatest enemy. We may have little to fear by way of revolution. We are more in danger of losing our freedom in small ways, a little bit at a time, in ways we might never notice.

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What this government is trying to do for the sake of efficiency is further reduce the opposition's ability to do its job in a reasonable way. I don't want to accuse them of sinister intentions. Everyone does the best job they can under these circumstances, but it is human nature to want to bend people to our will because we feel we know best what is right. A civil society should guarantee, however, that we will be able to maintain a balance between opposing views.

What this Legislature is experiencing now is a brewing frustration of a government hell bent for leather to drive its agenda through. It is acting as though its majority gives it carte blanche to do whatever it wants for the term of its mandate, no matter what anyone says.

Now the government has introduced a motion to further restrict the opposition and this is something we just can't accept. The opposition has a job to do. We must have the tools to do it. So-called frivolous and vexatious opposition tactics may seem silly on the face of it, but they are meant to send a serious message. A days-long filibuster reading endless amendments was really a plea to government to reconsider its bullying tactics towards a majority of the public the government refused to listen to any other way. We in the opposition were, in essence, the voice of the public saying no.

Without a doubt, the rule changes the government has brought forward will seriously erode the effectiveness of the opposition. As a result, we will be forced to use whatever means necessary to continue to do our essential work. It will look more and more desperate, because it will be.

The opposition works on behalf of the public. Never forget that. We work hard to keep the government honest, to reveal problems, to confront them on inconsistencies between their message and their actions. They will always tell you things are just fine. Of course. That's to be expected. But the opposition works hard to uncover the other side of the story so that you, the public, don't have to.

The government has used the routine procedure of a motion to push these changes through. Their strategy suggests that these rule changes are less important than they really are. In the past, when the government wanted to amend the standing orders, it struck an all-party committee to examine the entire package carefully, whether it had specific changes in mind or not. By that means, it assured itself of at least the nodding consent of a loyal opposition. Consultation creates allies, not enemies, as this government seems bent to do.

I have been a member of this Legislature for 12 years now. In that time, I have seen various rule changes implemented. Often they were not very popular, as the government of the day obviously tried to shift the balance of power a little closer in its direction, to strengthen its hand in moving its agenda forward. However, I believe the changes this government has introduced are the height of bad judgement. They are insulting. If these changes are to be implemented, it will signal a serious diminishment of democracy in this province.

Everyone accepts the fact that the government has a majority of seats in the Legislature and can pretty much

do what it wants to advance its agenda; in fact, no one would deny that it has been remarkably successful in doing so. It begs the question about the need for this motion. Does the government believe we are not going fast enough, or is the opposition just an inconvenience to them?

The opposition has used various, seemingly nonsensical, tactics with the sole purpose of having the Tory juggernaut slow down a little to let the people of Ontario get some sense of the implications of the individual pieces of this government's agenda — a completely justifiable intention, I would think. My colleague Alvin Curling, the member for Scarborough North, engaged in an apparent act of civil disobedience last year in order to force the government to take Bill 26 into public hearings, something it had not been prepared to do otherwise. Bill 26 had enormous implications for every sector in every ministry, for every citizen of the province of Ontario, and no one had any sense of what it all meant. Never mind. The government wanted it passed with a minimum of fuss: "No questions, please. Just trust us." I might remind government members and the public that individual ministers had no idea of what the legislation contained. I ask you, is that really the way you want the business of this province to be managed?

My colleague's actions were the only reason the government agreed to hold public meetings on this crucial piece of business. Now the government wants to make sure that doesn't happen again. Common sense should suggest that having ample opportunity for discussion and debate of the issues is crucially important. Through an effective opposition, the public asserts its right to have the opportunity of being exposed to the full range of views on the issues of the day and enough time to form their own opinions. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized.

This government has had no problem in advancing its agenda. Even among those people who support the government's aim, there is a feeling that the government is moving too fast, that it is moving more quickly than people are comfortable with. That was the reason the opposition parties staged the recent filibuster. It was the only way we had to force the government to slow down and pay attention to public opposition to its plan to amalgamate the cities of the GTA. We weren't doing this for the good of our health — Madam Speaker, you recall too well how many hours we spent on that filibuster — we were doing it for the public good. We listened to the people who asked us to speak on their behalf, and we used the only tools at our disposal to make the public will known. Now the government wants to make sure that never happens again.

This government places a great deal of importance on efficiency. Unfortunately, the most efficient parliaments are not democratic; they do not tolerate opposition. I would like to read you a recent quote: "An established democracy is not merely a form of government, but a political culture in which the population takes for granted that conflicts of political interest will be settled by constitutional means, under rules which are accepted by all parties, whether they win or lose at the polls."

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On the subject of efficiency, I'd like to say that parliaments are not sausage factories. There are more important principles at play here. In the British parliamentary system, it is understood that the government must get its legislation adopted in the end, but there should be ample opportunity for debate, even to the point that some members of the government might feel it takes too long. The British parliamentary system does not give opposition parties the right to stop legislation from going through. This can only happen if a majority of the House so desires.

The beauty of our system, if we only stop to consider it, is that we function with a loyal opposition. We may cause an uproar in the Legislature, but at the end of the day, the business of government goes forward. People do not shoot each other in our corridors. Opposition is expressed with words, not guns. Do we really appreciate how incredible that is? How many countries in the world envy what we have, how democracy exists in our country? Are we to let that go? Are we to let that be eroded?

I would like to return to my concern about how the government is moving to make these changes by means of a motion, without the full and considered involvement of the Legislature as a whole. Rule changes of this magnitude need to be more thoroughly examined than the use of a motion permits.

I would like to urge the government to proceed with caution in dealing with these rule changes. The government House leader has said that he has heard complaints about the lack of decorum in the Legislature. More important, members have said that the general atmosphere of the House is bad and that there is a lot of animosity in the chamber. I would like to warn the government House leader that if he brings these changes in, the situation will only get worse. Stifling the opposition, which is only trying to do its job, will only create more bitterness.

The opposition will continue to use whatever means it can find to make the voice of its constituents heard. Opposition is a legitimate function. The government must come to understand that; otherwise, their actions will haunt them when they again assume that role. Parliamentary procedure is constantly evolving, as it should, but when appropriate, changes should be implemented in a non-partisan way. The government should therefore abandon its unilateral drive to implement these changes.

I sincerely continue to believe it is possible for all of us to work together to achieve a better system, a system that will ultimately benefit the people who elected us, a system that enhances democracy rather than restricts it, as this motion is bound to do. Before we create more problems by rushing into things, I would suggest that the government strike a committee to examine these issues more closely, a committee made up of moderates from all parties, whose job would be to look into and weigh all the best available wisdom in this matter. In fact, we have a lot of expertise available to us. The table officers right in front of us have a wealth of experience and invaluable insight to offer to the discussion. Let's use them. If we don't, we're missing the boat.

The committee I'm proposing could have a majority of government members, and of course their views would prevail: You're the government, you're the elected officials. Nevertheless, its findings would be more likely to be accepted than the results of the current process. The spirit that must prevail is a spirit of cooperation and consensus-seeking. Only with that spirit can we develop a series of standing orders that will both permit legislation to move forward and ensure that there is a sufficient amount of flexibility and debate.

Again I quote: "In an important sense, opposition is more crucial to the functioning of democracy than government. Only if the government is constantly open to criticism and accountable to Parliament will it have an incentive to govern in the interest of all the people."

Sometimes I'm afraid it is too easy for us to take for granted what others in the world are fighting to achieve. Whether we are the government of the day or in opposition, we must force ourselves to take the broader view. It is our responsibility to safeguard for the long term the tools of democracy and preserve the fundamental rights of the opposition. As Walter Lippmann said, "In a democracy, the opposition is not only tolerated as constitutional but must be maintained because it is indispensable."

In conclusion, I really believe we can use this opportunity to do something positive. The standing orders are in many ways antiquated. Let's look at all the rules that govern everything from the beginning of a session to the end of a session.

Quite frankly, the changes you have introduced are offensive, and I can assure you that if they pass, the mood of the House will deteriorate further. As a result, everyone will lose. I call on the government to drop this motion, to start over. There is no shame in making such a move. You will not lose face. In fact, it would finally signal the government's flexibility and good intentions in this particularly crucial area. With the right attitude from all quarters, we can reform the system so that it can work for the benefit of all, especially for the people of Ontario. Preserving the democratic system is our highest calling and the greatest honour. Let us prove that we are equal to the task.

Mr Marchese: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to these rule changes. I think it's important at the outset to give a context of what this government is doing, and to create that context I've got to refer to some of the things they have already done. To that end, I want to refer to Bill 26, because in my view — Steve, please hurry back. I want you to listen to my speech.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'll be right back.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, please take your seat for a second. I think people are slowly going back to their seats.

Mr Marchese: That was just a colleague from the other side saying he'll be right back to listen to my speech, and I told him to hurry because I know how much he enjoys listening to what I have to say.

I wanted to give the context of the government's *modus operandi*. I refer you, Speaker, and the others who are here to Bill 26. In my view, that is one of the many

bills that speak to the *modus operandi* of this government. Through that bill the government shows and demonstrates its disinterest in the Legislature and in the democratic process.

People should be reminded about what it does. Bill 26 allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs to completely restructure municipalities without presenting those plans to the Legislature and further created a commission completely beyond public control with a mandate to radically rearrange our health care services.

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When they introduced that, they knew exactly what they were doing. The power that it gave itself and it gave its ministers, in particular here the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Health, is in my view very autocratic and it gives you a glimpse of the way this government wants to operate.

It's for that reason that I refer those who are watching this debate to that particular issue, because we need to get a sense of why the government wants these rule changes. It's a very strange thing, because they are behaving as if they don't have a majority. Why would they, in having 82 members, need to make these rule changes when we have seen over and over again that they have the ability to do what they want and they've done so?

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): Repeatedly.

Mr Marchese: Repeatedly. Bill 26 was that very bill that shows us the incredible power of government and the power that it can give itself, at least its ministers. You wonder why it is they need it when they have a majority government. Why would they then, through their individual ministers, give themselves more power?

Remember, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, through the ability to restructure municipalities without presenting those plans to the Legislature, was able in Chatham-Kent to appoint one individual, a Dr Meyboom, to do exactly what he wanted as the mouthpiece for this government. I have noticed repeatedly that they use these kinds of mechanisms as foils to do their dirty deeds. Dr Meyboom was such a foil for Mike Harris. This man, this doctor, went into Chatham-Kent, rearranged that municipality, and did it in a way that he felt fit without listening to the wishes of that municipality, of all those counties in Kent. He did so, in my view, disrespectfully of the wishes of those people. But he's a foil for the government. He did exactly what Mike Harris and his gang would have liked to do, but he did it through a mouthpiece, a foil, a marionette who does the bidding of the government in a way that allows the government to be able to say: "We didn't do it. Somebody else did."

He creates the impression of course that it's not Mike Harris but rather somebody else, and through Dr Meyboom and Mr Carroll here we get the sense that they've consulted widely with the public and that they like it. Of course, it remains to be seen. We've got to wait until the next election to see whether or not they indeed like it. But in all my dealings with those counties, they are very unhappy, and not just unhappy, because that's a pleasant word; they're very angry. In fact, they set up a citizen committee, as they did here in Metropolitan Toronto, to fight that forced amalgamation because it wasn't voluntary.

Dr Meyboom, Dr Doom, the man who went there and restructured these municipalities, did that on his own with a great deal of power that was given to him by this government through Bill 26, which permits him to do what he wants against the wishes of the public. That is the background and the context in which this government operates. We need to have a sense of that; otherwise, in listening to the member for Nepean, you might get the feeling that somehow what these people are doing is okay.

I heard the member for Nepean for quite a long time; I must admit not the full half-hour because it was too much to take. Talk about repetition. But I listened to him, and if you listen to him without a context, you might get the sense that there is a necessity to change the rules because this poor government that has 82 members, a full majority, is unable to do what it needs to do. But it has done so. With Bill 26, it was able to use its force to do what it wants. If you listen to my good friend from Nepean, who's coming to sit right beside me, you get a different view. You get a different impression.

But I have to tell my friend here — those of you who are watching, he's a Tory, a young Tory; I think he's a Reform kind of guy, although I don't know if he wants to admit to that — that they have a majority. You guys have 82 members. Why do you need to change the rules? As if you haven't been able to use your powers dictatorially enough, you need to change the rules to make it better for yourself. This sounds like Minister Snobelen who wants to make the system better by cutting money in education.

I've got the member for Northumberland here, Mr Doug Galt. Thank you for coming.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I thought I'd come over. I couldn't hear you over there.

Mr Marchese: Surrounded by great democrats, these great democrats from which was born that great document, the revolution document. These people are radical democrats. That's why they're coming to sit beside me as a way of helping me out, showing support for democracy.

So this government needs to stop behaving as if it doesn't have a majority. We need to remind you, the public that is watching, they've got 82 members. These guys have 82 members. Do they need more power?

They talk somehow as if these fine fellows haven't had enough time to be able to do more damage to the people of Ontario. Good heavens, have they not done enough damage already that they need to change the rules to inflict yet greater pain on the backs of all of Ontarians?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): Speak louder. You're putting me to sleep.

Mr Marchese: Mr Spina says I should whisper because I'm waking him up; he was trying to sleep and I'm waking him up. I understand. Some people are here to work and some people want to rest while they're here. I understand. That's okay.

The point is, we don't need to change the rules if you have a majority. The point is that you have been able to do a great deal already with your 82 members, mostly men with a few women — very similar in terms of politics — but you've been able to do what you want. Why do more? So the member for Nepean quotes very

smugly, as if somehow he caught the opposition by surprise, and says, "I want to quote my good friend the member from Cochrane," and he quotes at length in terms of what he said. I understand.

The problem is this, I argue: You were able to learn, those at least who were in the House, from what we did in government. Some of us while we were in government did not agree with the rule changes. But we had a few zealots, and I know this Reform Party has lots of zealots, ideologues who can't stand being here and not having absolute power to be able to do what they want however quickly they want to do it. So the zealots here — we had our own, I must admit — want to be able to change the rules and they say, "You've done it." They quote a few of our members and they quote a few Liberals as well and they say, "You've done it." But you would think that you would have learned something from our experience in terms of what we may have done.

You would think, by having the knowledge and the experience of what we did, that perhaps we might have done enough and that it's not to your benefit as a government to continue to whittle away at the rules, to restrict the ability of the opposition and to restrict the ability of the public out there to see, to view, to have an opportunity to debate, to have an opportunity to be heard, an opportunity to learn. You would think that you would learn from that and you would think you would know that curtailing our ability to be effective members of the opposition is not a wise thing for you to do. You must remember that some of you, or many of you, will be in the opposition benches in the next election. Our members thought we were going to be re-elected forever. Those who wanted rule changes felt that somehow they would be there for a long time and it didn't matter to some of them.

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Some of you have questioned your government, this guy here beside me — he's leaving now; thank you, John. Some of you in caucus must have said: "Let's look at this very closely. We may be in opposition the next time around. Are we helping to further democracy by curtailing it?" You need to ask yourself that question. I know that some of you have done so, at least those of you who had an opportunity at a late stage in the consultation process. I know that John and his two good buddies who put this together in consultation with Mike Harris must have had a great deal of discussion, but some of you probably didn't. But you may have had, in one caucus meeting, the opportunity to review this, and some of you probably reflected on this question I've raised with you: Are we furthering democracy by curtailing it?

You should put that in the context of being here in the opposition the next time around and whether it is good for you personally, good for democracy generally and good for the public in terms of their inability to have a better sense of and opportunity to know what you are doing, to know what any government is doing. It doesn't matter who is in power, the public deserves the right and the time to understand what it is doing and to understand whether it is in their interest.

Mr Spina: But nobody knew what you guys were doing.

Mr Marchese: Oh, they knew what we were doing all right, and you knew what we were doing too. That's why you prepared your campaign, because it was in the context of what the people were feeling. When the members opposite say, "You did it," it doesn't necessarily make it right for you to continue to do it. If we had made the rule changes that we might have achieved through the kind of discussion we had, because we did have a lot of debate on it, it might have been sufficient enough that you wouldn't need to curtail democracy any further. Learn from our experience rather than further complicating the problem, making it a little more complicated for the general public. Rather than using our experience, you use it to say, "Well, if you did it, we can do it too," as if that makes it better. It doesn't at all.

The minister said this is negotiable. This is not, in my view, very negotiable. When you put a gun to people's heads, that's not negotiating. When the minister says, "We may or may not introduce these changes, based on what you people do in opposition," that's a gun to the head, that's intimidation. That's not, "Let's bring out the peace pipe and talk about it; let's break some bread and talk about it," that kind of thing. That's not what it's like. You're putting the gun to our head. You're saying, "If you don't behave the way we want you to behave, we're going to force these changes on you, opposition."

The worst part of all this is that curtailing my right as an individual, curtailing the time I use to represent the public, is not as bad as curtailing the rights of the public in general. The public doesn't know what we're doing here, clearly. They don't know what rules we've got in place. Some of them mistrust governments, all governments. They tend not to like some of us, sometimes most of us. If someone says, "Change the rules," they might say, one way or the other: "It doesn't affect us. It's not a big deal." But those who follow and are active participants in the democratic process know and understand that there is a problem here.

Yes, you're curtailing my time, but you are curtailing the time of the public. That's why earlier today some of you watching witnessed the 100 or so people we had in the galleries demonstrating visibly against this government, against these rule changes. You're not just curtailing my time. They were not demonstrating against your curtailment of my time; they were demonstrating against your practices of rule changes that affect them and their say and their ability to scrutinize what you're doing. It affects them in terms of making you more accountable to the public. They weren't here defending me as an individual. They probably weren't even here defending the opposition. They were here this afternoon defending themselves.

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, come on.

Mr Marchese: Clearly, Mr Wettlaufer —

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Marion Boyd): Member for Fort York, first of all, please address people by their riding rather than by name. The member for Kitchener is not only out of his seat, but he is out of order.

Mr Marchese: Mr Wettlaufer, the member for Kitchener, who normally is right beside me, says, "Oh, come on," in reference to my point that the people demonstrating here today weren't here defending me,

necessarily; they were here defending themselves. Do you disagree with that, member for Kitchener? You don't disagree with that, so I'm not quite sure what your, "Oh, come on," was in reference to.

I know some of them take this lightly; I have no doubt. I know that in this discussion today some of them are very smug in the way they're presenting it. I listened to the member for Nepean. I listened to the member for Durham East as well, when he said there was a grass-roots movement for change of the rules. What grass-roots movement for the change of rules? Have you heard of a grass-roots movement out there? He said they were on every street corner out there. If there's a grass-roots movement, they're probably out there on those corners. I haven't seen this grass-roots movement of people on the corners clamouring for rule changes; I know they haven't either. Member for Kitchener, have you had this kind of grass-roots movement on your corners in Kitchener? He nods.

Mr Wettlaufer: They want more efficiency.

Mr Marchese: They want more efficiency. No, member for Kitchener. The guy from Durham said they're clamouring for changes out there, a grass-roots movement. That's deception.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, please refer to members appropriately.

Mr Marchese: I'm doing my best, Speaker: These honourable guys and women. No?

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Scratch the "honourable."

Mr Marchese: Scratch the "honourable" part?

The majority of Ontarians have no clue, and I mean this respectfully, about the rules of the assembly; they don't. For the member to say there's a grass-roots movement to change the rules is really deception, in my view; it dissembles the truth, truly it does. It doesn't speak to the reality we're aware of on our streets and street corners. What it does speak to is what Mr Skarica was quoted as saying. He says, "There's something wrong when the Premier" —

The Acting Speaker: Member for Fort York, please refer to the member by his seat name.

Mr Marchese: Where is he from? I'll find him, Madam Speaker: Wentworth North. It takes some time to find out where some of these guys come from. He said, "There's something wrong when the Premier and a couple of unelected staff people can run the entire province." That's what I'm speaking to, and that's what these rule changes are all about. It all connects back. I'm going to try to find the riding for Mr Carr in a second. That's what this is all about. It relates and connects to the style, the *modus operandi* of the Premier and his cabinet ministers and the few guys who surround the Premier in terms of the style of work. The member for Wentworth North knows that's the way this government operates. He has been there for a couple of years; he's still there — at least he's not an independent — so he knows very clearly what this government is all about.

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Another member, Mr Gary Carr from Oakville South, says, "Mike Harris has got to realize this is still a democracy, not a dictatorship." He's completely right.

Mr Kormos: What did Bill Murdoch have to say?

Mr Marchese: I've got to find out where Bill is from: Grey-Owen Sound. The member for Grey-Owen Sound, Mr Bill Murdoch, says this: "You have to be nicey-nicey" — I like that, nicey-nicey — "and kiss ass" — if that's permissible in this House; I'm not sure — "if you want to get ahead." I won't impute any motives to anybody doing anything in this House in order to get somewhere. We have seen this as a general practice for those who aspire to the cabinet office. That's a practice I've seen here: You've got to be nicey-nicey if you want to get ahead. The other person says, "This is still a democracy, not a dictatorship." They're all right.

When you change the rules, you are complementing your style of autocracy, your style of dictatorship — as if you haven't done enough damage to all of us and to the most vulnerable citizens of Ontario. As you do these changes, you pretend it's good for somebody. The Minister of Labour I call Madam Fair, because everything she does is always fair to somebody. It's usually even fair to the victims. You have the Minister of Labour talking in her usual sweet tones about how she's about to change the Workers' Compensation Board and all those changes are going to be good and fair to those injured workers. It's like when Brutus — no. Who was it who stabbed Caesar?

Mr Kormos: Yes, "Et tu?"

Mr Marchese: It wasn't Brutus who stabbed Caesar. No one's helping me out here.

Interjection: Cassius.

Mr Marchese: Cassius? The name escapes me and I feel bad when the name escapes me. Anyway, you're getting stabbed in the back and the person stabbing you in the back tells you, "This is good for you." It's really what this is all about. The Minister of Labour is about to stab injured workers in the back, as it were, and she says it's fair, it's okay for them. This government is about to change the rules and they say this is good for somebody; it's good for democracy.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: The member for Nepean says he's doing a good turn for democracy. They clap as they do it and they have this fine face, a wonderful veil brought down every time they introduce something that is about to inflict pain on somebody. They make it appear on the outside that this is good.

That's why I brought up the example of the Minister of Labour. When you're about to whack injured workers and you're about to give \$6 billion to the employers and you're about to take away \$15 billion from the injured workers, you call it fair. They clap and they say this is good. I don't understand how something that is profoundly unfair can be turned into something that is fair. That's the propaganda approach of this government.

You've noticed throughout my speeches that I've referred to the fact that a number of bills — the tenant protection package is one of many; there's a long list of these bills — have one title but their real content is the opposite. We know that.

That's why those of you who are watching need to mistrust what this government is doing. I tell you, when you have a majority government, you, the public, need to

ask yourselves the question, "Why do we need to change the rules to get our agenda completed?" They are completing their agenda and they're completing it in great haste, with a great deal of harm to the public. Do they need to change the rules even more to accomplish what they have begun? I argue no. They have the power and it is within their power to carry on with this ideological Reform agenda. They can continue to do it. They don't need to change the rules to do that.

The member for Nepean says, "Finally, we're going to get rule changes so some of us can speak." These people want to speak? You, the general public, those of you watching, have observed that when most of them speak in the House, it's with a prepared text. They read it, because Mike Harris wouldn't have it any other way. Speaker, you're in that caucus; you know that. Mike Harris wouldn't have it any other way, because he says to the people here, "We can't trust you to say anything that's not written for you."

Mr Kormos: Toni Skarica didn't use a speech from the Premier's office.

Mr Marchese: Exactly. Look where he is. He's pretty well out. If you depart from the text, if you get out of that little framework, you're pretty well out.

These guys on the other side want to speak more? To what purpose? So we can hear a repetition of what the minister has already said with respect to a bill? They talk about repetition from us. Do you, the general public, you good people, want to hear more of these members, as if you haven't heard enough from the minister? I warn you, you're not likely to get to see or hear many of these guys, these fine people, these honourables, very much or very often. I really believe that. You're not going to get to hear them. But if you do, you're going to get a prepared speech. Is that what you want? Not only a prepared speech, but highly repetitive of the propaganda message of the minister.

Mr Kormos: And inevitably boring.

Mr Marchese: And inevitably boring, of course. If it's repetitive, it's boring, and if it's a read speech, it's boring indeed.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know you want me to wrap up. The time is running out, I agree. I thank you for that.

You have 82 members. You can do what you want now. The rules are not going to help you. If you put a gun to our heads, as you have done, you will get very little cooperation and respect from the opposition benches. If some of you clamour for respect and a different kind of chamber, if you don't treat the opposition with the respect we deserve and the public with the respect it deserves, you will find chaos in this chamber and you will find greater chaos from the likes of the people who came here today protesting the dictatorship and the autocracy of this government. The modus operandi of this government is distasteful not just to us in opposition, but to the general public. I appeal to you, as they did, to repeal or get rid of these changes.

Mr Gilchrist: It's indeed my pleasure to speak today to this very important topic. As is my colleague from Nepean, who spoke a few minutes ago, I too am a new member, with only two years' experience under my belt

in this chamber. Perhaps I can be accused of some naïveté, but prior to the election, when putting my name forward to serve on behalf of the people of Ontario, hopefully on the government side, I certainly thought that once in this chamber, if I was successful, I would have an opportunity on every piece of legislation that came before us to bring forward the points of view of the people —

Mr Gerretsen: This won't do that. What are you talking about? That's absolute nonsense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. Interjections are not permitted.

Mr Gerretsen: But he's not speaking the truth. There's five hours of debate on this.

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Kingston and The Islands come to order, please.

Mr Gilchrist: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by the member opposite, the fact of the matter is that I thought it was going to be my role to bring forward the points of view of the constituents to whom I owed my position in this House. I thought it was incumbent upon me to both canvass their views and articulate them once in this House. I'm pleased to say that within 24 hours of being elected I came down to the government of Ontario bookstore and I bought a copy of the standing orders. You can imagine my chagrin and my consternation to discover that very, very few members have an opportunity to stand and speak on any particular piece of legislation — not under our government, under any government that's come before us.

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The fact of the matter is that three days marks the typical amount of time given to debate on any bill. The opening comments from each of the three parties take up four and a half hours of the seven and a half hours of debate: 130 members representing 11 million Ontarians, and three members representing only 300,000 people get 60% of the speaking time. That is shameful. It is utterly shameful.

What is more troublesome is that the member for Fort York, who obviously didn't think it was appropriate to stick around and hear responses to his comments, suggested that when we speak on this side, it is from a stock script. I would challenge that perception, and I would say just the opposite. When the members opposite stand, they very rarely deal with the topic before us. They're the ones who stand up with a litany of complaints about the government in general without dealing with the specifics of the bill that we're debating on any given day.

We don't get the chance, none of us in this chamber, to hear the contrary point of view, to hear specifics, to hear the sort of tangible input which would allow us a contrast to the original proposals we bring forward when a bill receives first reading. Instead, we hear rhetoric. We hear glib and self-serving rhetoric from people who are very frustrated that they are on that side of the House.

The bottom line is, these changes will break that control of three speakers for 60% of the time. It will guarantee that more members on this side and that side of the House, the backbenchers on both sides, will have a greater opportunity because there won't be any more 90-minute opening comments.

The fact of the matter is, as my colleague just showed me, even the *Globe and Mail* agrees that backbenchers will have an opportunity to raise their voices in this chamber. All of us, every single member on the government side and the opposition, have an equal right to state their case, an equal right to express the views of their constituents. We don't have that right under the rules today. We are constrained by arbitrary and prejudicial rules that have served the interest of governments far too much in the past, and we are hoping to break that hammerlock.

We are also doing a number of other things. I am astounded that the members opposite have not seen fit to at least recognize things that I would have thought any reasonable person would agree are dramatic improvements in the standing orders.

The ability to ensure that the budget of the government of Ontario receives full debate and an opportunity to guarantee that there is a vote on that budget: We have never had that before. I would ask you, what would the motives have been? What would the motives have been of the previous governments who did not want full exposure of their spending habits, who did not want full exposure of their taxation habits? Why did they not want guaranteed as a right to the people in this province six days of debate, or the opportunity of whatever number of days of debate we provide in here, and in particular a guarantee that there's a vote?

The opportunity to do that now — and I know the rule will change a lot of the time periods, the number of days for particular bills and the number of minutes given to each member, but the bottom line is that the goal of these changes is to improve our access and to improve the ability of all of our constituents to be heard in this House.

We've had a number of interesting contrasts in the debate so far today. As my colleague from Nepean also pointed out, as I wipe the dust off this, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly during the time of the NDP government prepared a report on the rights that should be accorded to independent members in this chamber. In fact, quite ironically, a former NDP cabinet minister, the current member for Elgin, was the gentleman who circulated this report, who sent this report in when the member for Nepean asked for all members in this chamber to provide input to his original suggestions for possible changes. I guess while we seem to get no credit from the other side when we do listen, the fact of the matter is that the member for —

Applause.

Mr Gilchrist: We have a new member in the House here, Mr Speaker.

We have proposed the acceptance of 100% of the recommendations of the report that was commissioned during the NDP's term in office, and we've had a number of other contrasts here today.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Somebody has been allowed in the chamber here that I do not recognize.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Gilchrist: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In fact, the interjection from the member for Kingston and The

Islands I think proves the point here. Given that his party pretty well restricts the input in this chamber to about four members, as is the case with the NDP, and given that the government allows a disproportionate amount of the time to the opposition members, it's quite understandable he may not have met any number of the members on the government side of the House, because they've never had a chance to speak.

Just to pick up on that point, I'm still trying to reconcile the fairness of 45 members opposite — that's 34% of the population in this House — having two thirds or 66% of the speaking time. That's a two-to-one ratio. It highlights dramatically the fact that the 82 members on this side, who obviously represent very many more people than are represented by the members opposite, don't have that same right. These proposals are all about restoring that balance, quite frankly regardless of which government is in power.

Let's go back to the contrast we've heard, because it was quite interesting that so far today we've had the input of a number of members who have risen in this chamber before and have spoken on this very topic before.

Mr Baird: What did they say?

Mr Gilchrist: I'll tell you what they said. In some cases their contributions earlier were made when they were also in opposition, but in some cases they were made when they were the government members themselves.

Mr Baird: What did the NDP say?

Mr Gilchrist: Let me give you an example of what the NDP has said before. Mr Bisson, who of course is the member for Cochrane South, in June 1992 — that would be when he was a member of the sitting NDP government — said: "The government does have the right to govern and at the end of the day it must put forward its agenda. Democratically, they have that right." But today he would suggest that we don't have the right. He said, "If a member can't stand in his place and make the points within a respectable period of time, 30 minutes, why do you need two hours to make that particular point?" We agree. Ninety minutes for opening statements is absolutely obscene.

Every Legislature in Canada and the federal House of Commons have similar rules. They have similar rules because they have recognized that you have to have a process to allow the Legislature to do its business, to allow legislation to go through the House. He isn't talking about rules that allow members to use Javex bottles under a blanket in this House. He's not talking about rules that allow people to introduce 8,000 frivolous amendments at a cost of almost \$250,000 a day to the taxpayers in this province. He was talking about rules that allowed full and honest debate on the merits of the pieces of legislation that are before us. That's supposed to be our role: not theatrics, not grandstanding, not showboating, but speaking to the topic of the day.

Instead of the stunts, instead of the showboating, if they spent less time on motions to adjourn and less time on debating things such as the very fact that we're here tonight on midnight sittings — they themselves wasted an entire day of debate to go through something that is

automatic at the end of every session and always has been. Instead of that, we would have another day to deal with this issue or Workers' Compensation Board reforms or education reforms or any of the important challenges that face this province. Unless their suggestion is that it is more important to play those procedural games than to deal with those important topics, those important challenges, I don't understand why they wouldn't embrace these rules, why they wouldn't be as excited as our members are.

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I can tell you that it's somewhat frustrating to know that the member for Nepean circulated his original proposals and many of us sent back our comments, including, as I had said earlier, the independent member for Elgin. It's frustrating that while they're prepared to come in here today and vilify the government and suggest there's no need for change and suggest everything's perfect, they didn't see fit to take the time to read these suggestions and to comment on them as Mr Baird, the member for Nepean, had requested. So again, while the TV cameras are on, they'll come in here, as they do every day, and at high noon they'll tell you that it's night outside as they put on their sunglasses. I'm sure the people who watch at home are getting just a little tired of that diatribe.

Let me encapsulate just some of the changes that are proposed by this. There would be a guarantee that any bill or resolution put forward by any individual member will ultimately be put to a vote during private members' hour. Let me just deal with that starting point. Many of the members in this chamber, including opposition members, have introduced very laudable pieces of legislation. They have introduced pieces of legislation that provide a perspective, that in some cases deal with minor changes to legislation that particular ministries may not have had an opportunity to address.

I have two private member's bills on the order paper. One of them is sitting at second reading, and given the fact that we have a lottery and each of us is entitled to have only one bill debated, it is likely to die on the order paper. As a result of that, we're going to go to this civic holiday in a few weeks and in most of Ontario it will be called civic holiday. Here in Toronto it's called Simcoe Day. Our opportunity to celebrate some of our British heritage, to celebrate one of the founders of this great province, to celebrate something that makes us unique and that I would have thought would be worthy of recognition, that minor change that would have seen province-wide recognition of Lord Graves Simcoe, will die on the order paper.

I have another bill which not only went through second reading but went through committee successfully. I believe it's the only bill that has done that. But it too in all likelihood will die at the end of the session because the three House leaders are not able under the current rules to find enough time to debate pieces of legislation like that for third and final reading. I'm not alone. I know Mr Wildman from the NDP and many of the Liberals have also introduced pieces of legislation that quite frankly I could support. In private members' hour, as all

the members will attest, during the last two years there have been bills introduced by members from all three parties that have received the acceptance of this chamber and that have moved on to either committee or, as I said, in some cases third reading. But that's where they're quite likely to die.

All the time and effort that was put into that and all of the benefits that would be accorded to people in this province will be lost because the current rules allow the House leaders opposite to ensure that we do not have the regulated amount of time to debate important private members' initiatives.

I mentioned earlier a guaranteed amount of time to debate on the budget and a requirement that the budget be voted on. Again, who could argue with that laudable goal?

Changes to make it easier for the Legislature to work longer hours: Here we debate today these important changes. Quite frankly, if you go through the math, in only about four and a half days of midnight sittings, every member opposite, if he or she chose to make a contribution to this debate, would have an opportunity to speak the full allotment of time. But again I would remind everyone that just a few days ago we wasted an entire day of the duty in this House debating the fact that we could even go to midnight sittings today. Their suggestion was that having the time, having another eight and a half hours of debate, having another 17 members able to contribute their point of view to this issue, was less worthy than to simply stand up and bash the government for two and a half hours, at which point there was the inevitable successful vote because we believe it's important that we put in time to guarantee that as much legislation as possible is passed this spring session.

There are provisions to ensure that funding for social programs and other vital government operations is not interrupted. We have the concurrences and we have the other financial dealings of the province that again, under the current rules, can be tied up. We could very well find ourselves in a situation where as a result of delays on the other side we are not able to write the cheques to pay the 80,000 civil servants who work for the government of Ontario. What is served by that? Clearly we have an obligation, we have a responsibility, but the rules allow that sort of stonewalling.

Of course, there are measures to ensure that the legitimate business of the House is not frivolously interrupted by MPPs who break the rules or find other arcane procedural delays and stalling tactics. For example, there could be no reasonable agreement that there should be a motion to adjourn before we finish what are called routine proceedings every day. The members opposite presumably believe it's important to ask questions during question period, presumably believe it's important to bring forward the petitions they receive from their constituents. Presumably they believe it's important every day to be able to stand up and make members' statements, which could be according some praise to an individual or group in their riding or pointing out to the people of this province that an event upcoming in their riding is something to be celebrated. Presumably the

introduction of bills is something that they believe is also an important aspect of how this government and how this chamber should do business.

But the rules right now allow us to waste 30 minutes — actually, by the time the vote is taken, 35 minutes — just by having someone stand up on the other side. When it costs about \$1,000 a minute to run this chamber, the folks at home can do the math of what that sort of frivolous abuse of the rules costs all of us, not just on this side. For us, it's just frustration. For the taxpayers, it's an out-of-pocket expense. It's lost time. It's a province that's gone further into debt, it's a province that's gone further down that road that we're trying to put a U-turn in back to prosperity and fiscal sanity. Every time we're delayed, every time we're held up at a stop sign, this province is beggared that much further. Nobody, not us in this chamber, not the people we represent, is served by that.

We've had a couple of other points made today that I really must take exception to. We've had two comments made by members opposite. Mr Wildman earlier made a comment that —

Interjection: The member for Algoma.

Mr Gilchrist: The member for Algoma — thank you — made a comment earlier that the PCs, when they were in opposition, actually cost the NDP one day of debate by calling quorum. I feel it's incumbent upon me to correct the record. It was in fact Mr Mahoney, a Liberal, who called quorum that day, and the day's debate was cost by the Liberals, the official opposition. I don't think it's appropriate that anything less than a full and factual accounting of history be part of the transcript from today's debate.

Second, the mythology on the other side, I'm sure, supports the comment made by the member for Carleton East just about an hour ago wherein he suggested that the little theatrics put on during the Bill 26 hearing by one of his colleagues somehow resulted in the committee hearings that occurred some weeks later. Leaving aside the fact that it was a disgusting antic to pull in this chamber, the seat of government in this province, the fact of the matter is that they were offered more hours of debate before that stunt. They wound up settling for fewer hours and fewer people in this province had a chance to give input to Bill 26 because of the time wasted here and quite frankly because they didn't like the first offer. Good negotiating. Great negotiating. I say that to the member opposite, who is in the chamber today.

We have circulated to all the members in the chamber these submissions that the House leader has introduced. They are very much an extension of an evolution of the rules in this House that go back right to its inception in 1867. I could spend some time dealing with some of the other changes that have been proposed over the years. I'll find my notes here. There might be a suggestion to someone who doesn't watch every day, and in particular someone who has not been following politics in this chamber for many years, but we have a history just in the last few years where the Liberals made significant changes to these same standing orders. Their changes included: prohibiting motions to adjourn the House till after question period, something that was undone by the

next government; the establishment of the House calendar; the establishment of an estimates review process. 1950

In 1991 the then government House leader, the member for Sudbury East, who has vilified us here today for suggesting that changes should be made, proposed a provision for evening sittings, as we have. She proposed the automatic passage of concurrences if not passed by the end of the fiscal year; we agree. She proposed the elimination of debates of committee reports; we've proposed that here today. She proposed that notice to the Speaker for matters of privilege be introduced but not take up the time of the House until the Speaker has had a chance to review them and come back to report.

I'm left to struggle with the contrast from the same member who is standing up suggesting that the package of changes we're making today is inappropriate, that it's undemocratic and draconian, to use their words, the words of the very limited bash-the-government vocabulary that are part of every speech over there — except for the member for Renfrew-Thesaurus; I accept that.

The suggestion is that when it comes from this side of the House, when it comes from this party, when it comes from this government, the changes are mean-spirited, undemocratic, dictatorial, that they'll somehow impede the rights of the members. Yet when she proposed them they were a great idea and she was quite concerned that they didn't find favour with the other two parties of the day.

I remind you that she was the government House leader at the time. She couldn't even make them happen when she was in government, so maybe it's a sense of frustration that her rules are now coming back in a different form. But I don't think it's appropriate to create the impression for those people watching at home or those people who read Hansard that somehow she genuinely disagrees with these rules when she herself proposed the same things just six years ago.

It went beyond that, because in 1992 they made a change; they made a lot of changes during the NDP's term of office. There was a new government House leader, the former member for Windsor-Riverside, and his changes included a formal time allocation procedure, a shorter House calendar and speaking time limits.

Interjection: We voted for it.

Mr Gilchrist: As my colleague points out, the PCs, the third party at the time, supported those changes even though they limited the amount of time that could be spent on debate. The old rules would have allowed almost unlimited debate on a bill; they're the ones who brought it down to the current roughly three days before you can bring in a motion to close off the debate. They went from unlimited to three, yet somehow our changes, which increase the number of members who will be able to speak to a bill, are wrong. Again I'm left struggling with that contradiction.

We're not allowed to use the H word in here, but it's somewhere between "hypodermic" and "hypochondriac." There can be no other answer, and I really think it becomes tiresome.

Earlier today we heard a long-winded diatribe from the member for Oakwood. I set the context of his comments here today. His entire entry into politics, back in 1981,

was on the basis that York should be amalgamated with all the cities of Toronto. He formed a group called Reform York — a word that's taken on a different context in the last few years — and ran on a platform that nothing short of the elimination of the city of York was acceptable, that York was an anachronism.

Of course today, now that either his House leader told him to or his conscience allows it, he was the opposition's number one spokesman against that self-same amalgamation here in the city of Toronto.

Interjection: Was that Mike Colle who said that?

Mr Gilchrist: Yes, that was Mike Colle.

We have the kind of contrast where they say one thing about House rules when they're in government, contradictions about the positions taken on other important pieces of legislation, and we're left to believe there's any credibility to the comments they're making in this? It is very frustrating.

We call on the members opposite. We have two years left in our mandate. Again, maybe I was naïve on the day I was elected, believing that members opposite, regardless of how the chips fell, whether I wound up in opposition or in government, would have an opportunity to bring forward their views and, more important, actually have input in the bills.

I can understand their frustration if they've been ordered to do this, but I find that somewhat hard to believe, because they're all independent thinkers on the other side, as I know all my colleagues are on this side. But they have gone through two years with the mindset, "It's far better to get zero percent, and we'll just bash every bill and try to create the mindset out there that every single clause in every single government bill is ill-considered and does not deal with the important challenges out there." All but the most mundane and house-keeping type bills have received that treatment, rather than their saying: "There are clauses in the bill," whether education reform or health care reform, "that any reasonable person would support. We're going to come down on the side of the government with those. We're going to build our credibility by saying that when it is good, we'll stand up with them, so that when we say there are clauses we do disagree with, sections of bills we really think need improvement," obviously on our side we would be far more likely to believe their input.

But in committee, in this House, it is a litany of woe. The nattering nabobs of negativism have decided there is nothing to be gained by actually being involved, by bringing forward the views of their constituents, nothing to be served by getting 5% or 10% of the legislative output of this government, of working with us, recognizing that our parliamentary system always accords a disproportionate amount of the authority in shaping legislation to the government side, particularly given that each of them in the last 10 years has had the opportunity to experience the differences between being on the government side and on the opposition side. I would have thought, with that experience behind them, they would recognize that it is far better to work with the government, far better to seek changes where they are appropriate, far better than to spend their time simply standing up and bashing everything that comes along.

People don't want that pessimism. People got that pessimism in spades from the last government and the fact is that they voted for change on June 8, 1995. They voted for optimism, they voted for jobs, they voted for a prosperous economy, and they're getting all of that. These changes allow us to carry forward and move even more firmly in that direction, and I support all these changes.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Scarborough North.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): Thank you, Mr Speaker, but I presume one has to wait a bit before the hot air dies down, if it ever goes down.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on these proposed rule changes, which we know this government put forward. It's not surprising the way they have done it. It's quite customary for them to sneak things through and then subtly: "Oh, it is just a little private member who suggested it or a backbencher who suggested it. It has nothing to do with the government." But as soon as they put that individual forward, they send the other guns out, the House leader and the Premier backing it strongly. We very much know that these proposals were drafted by the whiz kids in the back and the government itself who wanted all this, and then saying, "We wanted change."

I want to talk a little about democracy and a bit about the democratic process. When I came to this House in 1985, I was elected by the people of Scarborough North. One mandate I had, a very straight mandate, was that I should bring to this House the concerns and the aspirations they hold dear and some of the frustrations they have and let them be known, so that whenever laws, regulations or what have you are being discussed, the concerns of the people I represent are heard. But lo and behold, in 1995, when this government was elected, some of those approaches through which that could happen here just went out the door. They went out in the way they were doing business.

2000

First, when the Conservative-Reform government got elected, they felt very strongly that they had a mandate to do anything they wanted at any time to anybody they wished to do it to. Immediately, with one stroke of the pen, they took 20% of the income from the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society, those who depend on an income from the welfare system — no discussion, no debate, just a stroke of the pen. Those individuals said, "I'd like to speak about the impact it has on me," and the opposition tried to say, "Let me tell you what you have done, the concerns of those people suffering under the 20% cut." If the Premier got up one day and said he would take 20% of the salaries of the people in the Premier's office or from the members of Parliament here, we would have had a long debate, but those who had no representation, who thought they had representation through people like me and my colleagues, could not make those presentations to this government, because they said that with one stroke of the pen they can do that.

When people demonstrated, they called them interest groups. They called out the police with horses to keep the people from approaching their elected members, the ones who said they had a mandate to govern. Therefore,

inaccessibility becomes the order of the day for the representatives to the House of Parliament. That's what it's all about, the democratic process through which people are elected to present the concerns and the aspirations of people, but they could not be heard.

I think we have had more demonstrations since this government has taken governance of this province than any other government we have seen. Each day we have concern. The people are saying, "We'd like to meet the minister." They were an endangered species; I thought they were dying out in the first year or two years. I didn't see one, not one of those members, on any public occasion in my area. The member for Scarborough East was found wanting. We couldn't find him. Where was he? Hiding, because he was so busy trying to cut away some of the representation that the people want so much.

When those people on welfare got 20% cut from their income and they said, "I cannot pay my rent," they were told to go and negotiate it with their landlord. Furthermore, when they said, "If I do pay my rent after the 20% decrease I got, I'll have no food for the children." The audacity of one of the ministers — he told them, "Come, I'll give you a menu and I'll tell you what to cook and what to eat, and here's how you should shop and what you should buy." They already had the answer. They needed no representation.

Of course, he said he had been buying dented tins of tuna and that it was cheaper than buying the things they wanted for their children. He was going to tell them how to eat and where to live, because they would deprive them of their income. One stroke of the pen caused that.

Then in the wee hours of the night, they concocted Bill 26. I was extremely interested in it. When I saw this huge bill to make all these massive changes, I wanted an opportunity to read it. I lacked the opportunity to read it. When we stood in the House to say this bill was coming through and pleaded with the Speaker to give us the opportunity — the mandate I got and many of us got to represent the people in this place — we were denied that. We were denied even the time in which to digest or understand what we were voting on. The budget was being done at the same time, sneaked into the House to be passed, again not only denying me the time to read it but even the opportunity to vote on it.

I was not the only person who felt that way; all my colleagues in the New Democratic Party and in the Liberal Party and of course some members over here felt that way. The difference is that the members of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party recognized that and decided, "We shall not continue unless we have the opportunity to read the legislation," because what we heard coming from the House leader and the Premier of this province was: "We will not give you your mandate to exercise one bit. As a matter of fact, we need this legislation by Christmas, first, second and third reading. That's it." We said: "Oh, golly, this huge thing giving you all these great powers? Don't you expect us to make you accountable for the things you are doing, to do the job as an opposition, to point out to you the things that would happen, the repercussions, the consequences?"

They decided to ram this thing through, and when we linked forces that this should not go through in any way,

the only concern that the Conservative-Reform party over there had was, "We're wasting time," that democracy somehow was getting in the way, "Discussion and debate are getting in the way of our doing our job in the way we want to do it." Hence they got the name "bully" — pushy and very undemocratic in their manner.

I sat here and many of my colleagues sat here all through Wednesday night and into the morning to send a clear message that the people would not tolerate that, and we, the representatives of the people, who were elected by the people to do the job for them, would not tolerate that. They said their bill was a perfect bill and needed no discussion. As a matter of fact, on many occasions we couldn't even find a Tory member to debate, to put their contribution into many of the bills put forward in this House.

Now they want rule changes because they feel backbenchers need more time. There are backbenchers in the Conservative Party who sit quietly, day in and day out, not making one contribution, but they need more time. You had your instructions to go along with what the House leader told you to do, and when we spoke from this point of view, they said, "You are holding up the process, so we will put in something called closure and we'll shut this debate down, because we want to get on with the things that the people told us to do."

But I think they forget there's one thing in your way: the people in this province, who have a long memory, not a short memory. There are many people in this province, in this country, whose grandparents and fathers fought in wars to get a democratic process so their voices would be heard, their concerns would be heard. There are some countries, as you know, that have fought for this and many have died for it. Many of us have relatives, grandparents, fathers, brothers or what have you, who died so that all people can be represented, and the best way they can do this is in this democratic process.

But this government does not see it that way. They come through saying, "We need to move on with this to do the things we were mandated to do." We cannot find anything in your mandate that tells you that you will deny especially the opposition to speak.

2010

Then they start saying that what they should do is limit times. They are so concerned about the backbenchers and the opposition and who should speak. I think they should be concerned, very much so, about the people out there who want to hear if their concerns are being articulated effectively and well.

Some of the things we may say are rather boring, so some of us can express ourselves in five or 10 minutes and the message is heard by some. Many times when we speak in this House, we are not speaking to the members here; I am speaking and many of us are speaking to the constituents who have elected us to come here, who say, "I wonder if this member understands my concerns."

Just today I asked a question about the family support plan, a program this minister put forward and has really botched up so terribly. Five minutes afterwards, I had three calls outside from people who called and said, "I'm glad you raised that question." Again, if we consider that we're making rules here for our own selves, we're wrong.

We are making rules in the democratic process so that all our people can be represented in the way they should and so they can understand that, but you're pushing this through without having a full, proper way of doing this.

My colleague from Carleton East made one of the most profound speeches I've heard in this House, a very compassionate, very sincere speech to say that the way you are doing this is wrong. If our colleagues here missed it, I would say to you, go back and read it. If any individual outside, beyond the walls of this tower, would like a copy of that speech, they should call in at any time to the Legislature so we can send it, so they can understand what he was saying. It was very non-partisan. He was saying, very much so, that the democratic process should rule, that we have an opportunity, in a very non-partisan way, all of us, the 135 — or the 103 to come — to express the views of all the people.

Sometimes those interest groups that we're talking about, if a law affects five or six people in this province in a very negative way, we are here to address those concerns. Therefore, if it takes three people to be an interest group, I'm interested in their concerns. I'm interested in every single individual in my constituency, to see that the laws and the regulations of this place are conducted in a manner to serve them all — that's what we're here for — but not in this arrogant manner that we see.

The example we saw that was so vivid was Bill 103, the megacity, affecting almost three million people. The people were saying to themselves, "We would like to know that we have a contribution to say whether we'd like it or not." The arrogance of this Premier and this government saying, "It does not matter what the people say; we will do what we feel we want to do and to heck with them all." The people were saying, "You are going to affect my life, you are going to raise my taxes, you are going to change so many things in my life that I'd like to tell you what impact it has on me," and he said, "It doesn't matter if you say you do not want it."

In this great mandate that he had in his Common Sense Revolution book, it said, "I will accept a referendum," but when the time came to realize that a referendum would not work in his favour, where the people themselves were saying, "I don't want to go the way you are going," he said, "It doesn't matter; I will not listen to the people" — another set of arrogance in itself.

We come before this Parliament and before the people about a rule change. It sounds rather simple but it's going to have a great impact on us.

I just want to emphasize the importance of the opposition. Even when I was in government and had to listen to the points of view raised by the opposition, quite a few of the things I heard I didn't like and quite a few of the things maybe too I did not understand. Then it took me beyond that. I had to take another position beyond just listening, to make sure that an opportunity of further discussion happened, that I or my government would not in any way start saying: "There's no way. You have a limited time to speak, a couple of hours, and we'll ram this thing through for second and third reading and make this law." We had to listen.

A good example of that was Bill 51, when I was the minister doing rent control. I said, very much so, that we

had to listen to all. Does it impact on the landlords? Does it impact on the tenants? And not only tenants and landlords within the city but all across this province. So there we were, we went out to have that consultation and we did change many parts of it. As a matter of fact, we set up a tenant and landlord panel committee to discuss most of that and to make our changes.

This government feels they don't want any amendments. When we went back to Bill 26, which they thought was just perfect and needed no amendments but would have gone through within a very short time of two or three months, what happened was that the government itself had over 150 amendments. Just think about it. When it was introduced, it was perfect. If there had been no discussions, all those amendments would not even have seen the light of day in this legislation. We had to demonstrate in a most exercised manner what the opposition could do to stop them in their tracks, to say, "It shall not be so." The government themselves came back with over 150 amendments — as a matter of fact, more than that — to say, "Yes, many of the things we have said here have been wrong." We wanted very much for them to pull back this omnibus, draconian bill giving them enormous powers, to find out the impact it had.

They didn't mind at all. They don't care, because within the back rooms of the Premier's office this legislation and these policies are being drafted and handed to the Conservative-Reform Party inside their caucus, and they're told, "You just fall in line and vote accordingly." And here we are now. Those backbenchers who did not speak up at all, neither on Bill 26 nor on Bill 103 — and many, many other bills — there they are talking about bringing forward amendments, Mr Speaker, if I can get your attention for a moment, there they are saying they want more backbench representation when they themselves did not participate in many of these things.

2020

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Because you took up all the time.

Mr Curling: The member says because we took up all the time. Sometimes democracy is a very slow process and sometimes an arrogant government feels that democracy gets in the way of doing their job. They come here with their business sense. They say: "We're running a business. The bottom line is money. The bottom line today is that we cannot talk about things at all; we just want to get to the end of it all. We've got to balance the budget, we have to do all these things, and in that process, don't let democracy get in the way. It's a very tedious thing." They go further. "People get in the way," they say. Not only the concept of democracy but people get in the way.

"Why should I be listening?" the Minister of Labour said. "I don't want more than three people talking to me." Why is it that as many of these delegations came forward, the Premier immediately stated that they were interest groups? "People are getting in the way of doing our business." While doing the people's business, people are in the way.

We want to make sure that when the rules are changed around here, they're not only changed for us but they're

changed for all the people of this province. We know, of course, that you have a mandate and you can't go beyond your five years. But the damage you're doing right now to this province, some of it, it will be a long time before we can reverse that damage. Rest assured that we will be reversing some and that we will try to correct it, like the elimination of rent control. They had promised at one stage they would not and then they came in and wiped out rent control, calling the people, in a certain way, fools. "They don't understand this, that we're not taking it away." But I can tell you that the people are quite astute and always more intelligent than many of us here. When we stop listening, then we condemn that process.

I know that my appeal to these members here will never change their mind, because the pattern has been set. The arrogance of their attitude over the two years they've been here has given them the label of a bully government; bully because what they intend to do, they will do, regardless of who is there; it is the arrogance of this government, which felt that racism and many things don't exist in this province, so they eliminate employment equity, dilute the Human Rights Commission and do all these things because these things are dealing with people and their concerns, and they're getting in the way of doing business.

But the big boys on Bay Street don't get in their way. As the Minister of Housing stated to the landlords, "Now you have a friend," and then told the tenants, "You're all a bunch of interest groups, and I don't want to even listen to you." Is that the message you're giving?

But the power of the vote will be there. If you had the opportunity, you would of course eliminate elections too, because that would get in the way and that has to do with people. No matter what rules you make today, no matter what rules you change to make your government and your bully attitude more efficient, the morning comes. It may be dark now, but the morning comes. The light will come up, when you have to look them straight in the face, you the Speaker, you the member, every elected member will look the voters straight in their eyes and say, "I have done the things I want to do." They will then say to you, "Maybe you have done that, what you want to do, but you have not done the things that I wanted to have been done," because you have set yourself up as a demigod.

"But the fact is that we are right and you, the people, are wrong." They'll say: "How come I'm not better off today? How come fewer people are making more money and more people are making less?" You'll say: "Well, aren't you happy that we balanced the budget? Aren't you happy we have a great surplus in our budget?"

Then they'll ask you: "Are you happy that my children are hungry? Are you happy that my rent has gone up 20% or 30%? Are you happy about that?" Maybe you are, and maybe those who are making money will say: "Wait a bit. The fellows I gave the money to will be giving you jobs sooner or later." They'll say: "It's funny now that they're investing outside of my country; they're not investing in me. So I don't see any jobs. More profits in the banks is what I see. I see more profits all over." The fact is that the people are saying: "I don't think you'd listen to me at all. I don't think you want to do the

things I want you to do because you feel that you are right. You are right and we are wrong. When we elected you in numbers, in popularity, and you became the government, you stopped listening. You shut this place down." People are even finding it difficult to come and listen to their people within the Parliament here, this democratic process, to see their members.

A rule change here will make no difference. An attitude about how we represent our people is the key to how we conduct democracy. Again, in my speech, I'm not appealing to the members here. It's no use appealing to them. They have set their pattern of arrogance, their pattern of bullying through this process. They have set their ways because they're concerned about their bottom line. They're concerned about making sure their friends can get a nice tax return, and the poor, the majority, will continue to suffer. The numbers of the poor in our society are getting larger. Food banks are larger. The population that comes to the food banks is getting larger. So we reduce welfare because we can kick them off and we can introduce any draconian policies we want.

One of the things I would suggest to them, since I am on that fingerprinting stuff of the welfare people, is that I would like you to fingerprint all the corporate people in businesses that got money from the government, because they are getting government money just like the welfare people. Fingerprint them all. Once you give out money from the coffers of the government, I think they should be fingerprinted. I think that should happen.

As for democracy, I would say to the people outside, take a keen look at these people here, this democratic process we are in, this Conservative-Reform mentality we have seen. Take a keen look at them. Come the day we have to be accountable, they will not be found hiding like they've hidden for the last two years, and now want to ram things through, shut this place down and then go out smiling, hoping people will forget. They shall not forget you because you have set your pattern as a bully. We will continue to remind the people that it's these people, the Conservative-Reform, who have put them in the state they are in today. The big fellows on Bay Street and all those who are making big profits will put the money in their pockets, and you will not be able to respond to those people in the right way that you should. Long live democracy. I hope you people go down the way you should.

Mr Kormos: This is the second time in five years, five years almost to the day, that I and a whole lot of other members have been confronted by so-called rule changes. I don't think it will come as any surprise — it didn't come as a surprise to very many when I opposed the rule changes of 1992 — that I oppose these today.

One of the interesting things is the argument that the rule changes are being performed to facilitate participation of backbenchers. Why I find this remarkable in this context is that that was the same argument that was used in 1992 by members of that government who made similar speeches and by a House leader who withstood the outright wrath of, among others, Mike Harris, who as leader of the third party was unrestrainable in his concern expressed to the House leader that this should happen without negotiation, that it should be imposed by a

government abusing its majority and that, although said to be done for the purpose of facilitating, among other things, the participation of backbenchers in debate, really has a far more significant and further-reaching purpose.

2030

I know that the Conservatives, some six, seven, eight of them, voted for the rule changes. I've got their names here. Not all of them are present. Some I suspect were concerned about it. But at the end of the day, the motive of the last government was no more preferable to the motive of this government. I suppose these Tories haven't changed their stripes. They're as reluctant to see meaningful debate now as they were five years ago in 1992.

What I find interesting is the number of second and especially third readings wherein the Tory caucus abandons its shared portion of the time for debate. Just last week, another round of debate where the whole afternoon, because the Tories didn't want to participate in third reading, was left up to the Liberal caucus and the New Democratic Party caucus. I can tell the members from the Conservative —

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): What bill?

Mr Kormos: I can't remember the bill.

Mr Gilchrist: Name the number then.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Kormos: But I do remember watching the Tory backbenchers sit there silently, merely keeping a quorum, declining every opportunity to participate in the debate. I find it remarkable —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You were muzzled by your own government.

Mr Kormos: Mr Villeneuve refers to me as being muzzled. They may have wanted to administer rabies shots from time to time but they never muzzled. Notwithstanding the best efforts, they didn't muzzle.

We've got a group here now, most of them two years here in Parliament, all of them — and I indicated this when I spoke back in 1992. I was confident that every member who ever ran for this Legislature or any other Parliament did so with the best of intentions, was committed to making meaningful changes on behalf of their constituents or even meaningful changes around the Legislative Assembly or the process in it. I have no hesitation in saying once again that I suspect every member who was elected here, even these Conservative members, came here with the best of intentions.

I'm concerned, however, about what appears to be one of the solutions to backbenchers not being able to participate in debate, and I'm convinced that a whole lot of Tories after 1998 or 1999 will have the chance because they'll be a member of a much smaller caucus. I can assure them that it's far easier to be involved and engaged in debate when you're in an opposition caucus with only 30-plus or 16 or 17 members. I'm confident that the Tory backbenchers who are concerned about not having an opportunity to debate when they're in an opposition caucus in relatively short order will have plenty of opportunity, will be called upon more frequently than they would want to be to engage in debate on second or third reading or on motions like this.

This is a slippery slope. People in the New Democratic Party caucus who approved similar rule changes and who probably are accountable, quite frankly, for the progression that we see now — I have no hesitation in saying that — understand now, and you've heard them as they've spoken to this motion, how dangerous the proposition was in 1992 and how even more frighteningly dangerous it is now. This government is effectively recommending that backbenchers, if they're going to be allowed to participate, have but 10 minutes to engage in comments if you're after the first time slot —

Mr Baird: Five hours.

Mr Kormos: If you're after the five hours of initial debate, but 10 minutes to participate in debate.

This government witnessed in the gallery this afternoon an outburst by members of the community. I suppose it wasn't particularly desirable and was uncomfortable for everybody involved, including the people who felt compelled to do it. I spoke to them after they were escorted out of the visitors' gallery. I can tell you this, Speaker: There's going to be more and more of that sort of disruption here in this Legislative Assembly and in communities and in public places across this province if this government persists in what has been described as jackboot tactics — jackboot tactics which haven't been equalled by any previous government, even on their worst day.

I was down at the Croatian National Home last week. One of the members of the Croatian National Home was working in the kitchen doing cleanup. He came to me and he said, "Pete, I've lived under a whole lot of different kinds of governments. I've lived under the Germans when they occupied Croatia," he has lived under Nazi governments, "I've lived under Communist totalitarian governments and now I'm witnessing what I see coming out of Queen's Park with Harris and his government." He said, "Peter, I thought I had seen it all, but the Harris government challenges everything I've ever experienced" under what he believed was the worst of jackbootism, the worst of totalitarianism, the worst of anti-democratic practices and exercises.

I was down in Thorold on Queen Street at the Exolon strike picket lines. It's not a strike yet, because the contract negotiations are taking place. Seventeen of the 36 Exolon workers currently engaged in negotiations are struggling hard with a profitable company that has no qualms about paying its corporate bosses big bonuses, trying hard to resist the demand for concessions. They expressed concern to me. They watch the legislative channel, and the government members know there are a whole lot of people who do, and are expressing incredible concern to me about a government that suppresses debate, a government that doesn't listen to either members of the opposition or members of the public who take time out of their lives to come here and protest.

Mr Gilchrist: You voted against your own colleagues.

Mr Kormos: One moment. Repeat that again, Mr Gilchrist.

Mr Gilchrist: Did you not vote against your own colleagues in their rule changes?

Mr Kormos: Mr Gilchrist makes a point. He suggests that I didn't support my colleagues when they presented their rule changes. I quite frankly didn't. I thought at the

time that the restriction on debate to 30 minutes was an incredibly oppressive exercise. I thought it was an incredibly undemocratic thing. Now I find myself struggling to maintain a mere 30-minute time limit.

I don't understand where Mr Gilchrist — he's not sure whether he wants to agree with me that it was right or concur with me that he is wrong in supporting these rule changes. All I'm suggesting to him is that what goes around comes around. Mr Gilchrist, if he's among the fortunate Tories to be re-elected to an opposition caucus, will find himself frustrated and angry.

Mind you, I witnessed the Harris filibuster — nowhere near as creative as some filibusters that preceded it and nowhere near as riveting to the members of the Ontario public — the reading of bills. I recall the government of the day — I just read the Hansard — attacked Mr Harris, accusing him of spending some \$300,000 of taxpayers' money by consuming that time in the Legislature, not a particularly novel critique, because of course it's one that this government employs on a regular basis.

I don't understand why these government members talk about wanting more opportunity to participate in debate when those who do speak out find themselves silenced in such short order, be they the Toni Skaricas or the Gary Carrs or the Bill Murdochs et al. I find it troublesome that they talk about wanting to participate in debate, they talk about wanting to make a difference, they talk about wanting to speak on behalf of their constituents, yet most of the exercise appears to be simply doing the trained seal act and nodding when told to nod, applauding when told to applaud, lessons being learned oh-so-quickly by the likes of Skarica and Carr and Murdoch who, when they do speak out, find themselves ousted.

Not one of these people has found the courage yet to vote with their conscience rather than with what they perceive to be short-term goals in what will inevitably be brief political careers.

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When I'm down on the Exolon picket line with workers from Exolon, I'm confronted by the concern that these working people have about a government that is increasingly unresponsive not only to debate in the House, but to public comment and public opinion. We witnessed just a couple of weeks ago the futile effort of Mr Sheehan from Lincoln to create right-to-work legislation here in Ontario, to import the standards that prevail in the American south in places like South Carolina, Arkansas, Florida. That bill was defeated — not soundly, because it was clearly in tune with what a whole lot of the government backbenchers support.

I find, notwithstanding the defeat of that bill on second reading, a resolution now from one Mr Fox to be debated June 26, 1997, again echoing the sentiments of the Sheehan Bill 131: "That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should disallow the undemocratic requirement of mandatory fee collection by unions." Undemocratic requirement? That reveals a complete ignorance of any understanding about what democracy is all about. "Trade unions should have the right to exist as the bargaining agent for employees, but there should not be a provision to allow for mandatory deduction from the wages of each employee in the unit affected by the

collective agreement, the amount of the regular union dues and the automatic remittance of the amount to the trade union."

This is the contrary of any sense of democracy. Too many people, like the people from Welland-Thorold, like workers in industry there over the course of generations, have struggled too hard and for too long to developing some modest rights for working people to see them being placed under direct attack by this government without there being a considerable and substantial response.

This government is willing upon itself confrontations and levels of violence which haven't been seen in this province for half a century. This government which talks about law and order is creating in fact disorder. This government which talks about family values is doing more to attack families and undermine healthy families than any government ever could. This government sustains higher and higher levels of unemployment; in Niagara region 10.9% and among young people, people under 25, levels of unemployment that are twice that.

This government abandons a high-wage economy and pursues southern US style — we should be talking to people about what "right to work" means, what the model is that this government's importing in the most brutal way. Right to work means the virtual abolition of minimum wages. Right to work means undermining trade unions so that they barely exist in name alone, so that their power or their effectiveness in negotiating on behalf of workers and protecting seniority rights, in achieving fair wage settlements, is undermined to the point where they become the ilk of trade unions in the most totalitarian regimes that the world has ever witnessed.

That's the kind of standards this government is importing into this country, standards that are a direct confrontation of anything akin to democracy and standards that reveal that this government — I'm not convinced that it isn't aware of what democracy is. I'm confident that it's well aware of what democracy is, but I'm also confident by its blatant conduct that it's prepared to undermine democracy in this institution and across this province as effectively and as thoroughly as it can in as short a period of time.

This government attacks workers. It attacks students. It attacks seniors. It attacks retirees. It attacks kids who are trying to get education in elementary and high schools and in community colleges and universities. I've had occasion to reflect with people in Niagara about what this government's attitude towards post-secondary education means to so many young people in our province. This government cut a deal with the University of Western Ontario so that it could charge full-fee, American-style tuitions of \$18,000 a year for the two-year MBA program. This government refers to the good old days. It means the good old days when only the children of the wealthiest families could ever dare think of receiving post-secondary education.

This government talks about the good old days. Well, the good old days were when the poorest and the weakest and the most vulnerable had to use soup kitchens and rode on the bread line looking for handouts. The good old days were when people with disabilities were relegated to institutions or, even worse, to homelessness and

poverty and complete isolation from the mainstream of the economy or the community. This government talks about good old days when women didn't have access to programs and second-stage housing to protect them from violent, abusive family situations and household situations.

Where I come from, those weren't the good old days. Down in Niagara, and I'm convinced across this province, people understand that there's nothing about much of our history that we should be particularly proud of. There's nothing about the struggle of working people for rights in the workplace that shouldn't be held in the greatest regard and respect. There's nothing about the struggle for universal access to education and health care as well and the sacrifices that were made by so many people in the course of that struggle that shouldn't be held in anything but the highest regard. This government holds those sorts of values in total disdain.

The government talks a big game about its tax break, two thirds of which is going to go to the top 10% of income earners. People understand that increasingly across the province. People have seen their tax break. It hasn't amounted to much. I'm talking about working people and the working poor, the unemployed, seniors and retirees. They've seen that tax break, and as far as they're concerned, if the drive to provide that tax break is what's causing this government to undermine and underfund public education, to underfund and undermine health care, to shut down hospitals like they're doing across Niagara region and throughout the province, if that's what this tax break is all about, the working people I talk to, the retirees, the pensioners, the seniors, are saying the government can keep its tax break.

This government talked a big game about creating 725,000 jobs. Yet we've seen the total number of jobless increase in Ontario and in Niagara region, not just the number of jobless but the percentage of jobless as well, where unemployment has actually increased rather than followed the national trend of some modest downward movement.

I'm concerned that this government doesn't recognize the crises it is creating. I'm concerned that this government, ideologically driven, probably true revolutionaries in that regard, has disregard for the democratic process and for debate.

This bill isn't about allowing more government backbenchers to participate in debate. This bill is all about reducing and stifling the amount of debate that can take place here in the Legislative Assembly in response to the legislative agenda that it pursues with such great haste.

One wonders why the government would be so concerned about the backbenchers' right to participate in debate when it's similarly using time allocation more frequently than ever before, than any government ever has in this province. I understand the allure of time allocation. I understand how uncomfortable it is for a government to be subjected to criticism day in and day out, but I also find it increasingly troubling, and I'm confident that people across the province do as well, that this government talks about wanting to have more debate but in fact is, on a continuous daily basis with its time allocation motions, restricting debate.

This government talks about wanting more debate, but it's going to be limiting the amount of time that many backbenchers will have on the floor to engage in debate to a mere 10 minutes. Again, their motives aren't to encourage debate; their motives are to discourage debate. It's incredibly frustrating and again unfortunately not very many of those government members knows this. There are some here in the chamber right now who were here when the Conservative Party was the third party, quite frankly some of them who, when there was opposition to the Liberal government's Bill 68, applauded and encouraged some extraordinary efforts that were made on the part of the opposition parties to stall and delay Bill 68, the David Peterson auto insurance bill, which was being rammed through the Legislature and which was running contrary to the will of virtually every sector of the community but for the insurance industry.

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The Conservative caucus members of that day, when they were the third party, as I say, joined in and applauded some rather extraordinary tactics that were utilized around Bill 68. Their own leader, with his lakes and rivers and creeks and drainage ditches of Ontario bill, again far less creative than the Bill 68 debate, none the less had the full support of his caucus, and I say for good reason. As important as it was in the Bill 68 debate, the issue around the Liberal no-fault auto insurance, it was important to the Conservative Party to draw attention to their concerns about what was happening in the Legislature, when Mike Harris read the list of lakes, rivers, streams and drainage ditches across the province. It was important to them when Bill 162 was being debated, when Shelley Martel, the member for Sudbury East, led the struggle against the amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act that were introduced by the then Minister of Labour, Greg Sorbara. Again, the Conservatives were in there thick as thieves. Can I say that? It's just a saying. They were there thick as thieves, without hesitation.

Now they find themselves in government — I'm sure to the great surprise of more than a few of them, as it was two years ago almost to the day — but they're not going to be in government forever. They talk about wanting more debate, so they move a motion that would restrict time on the floor for individual members to a mere 10 minutes at the end of the day. Yet they don't acknowledge that they're importing rules that are being applied in the federal Parliament, with some 300 members, into a House which will have after the next election but 103 members. They have effectively reduced the number of people who will be representing Ontarians in the Legislative Assembly and then want to dramatically reduce the amount of time that they have on the floor to engage in debate.

The public doesn't buy it. People in Niagara don't buy it, and people in Niagara aren't that much different from people anywhere else in Ontario. They just don't believe this government any more. They know that the government does a real good job at doctoring up spin, at getting the flippant phrases across and at building some mythology and imagery. It's the sort of tactic that this government used during the course of the last election campaign

where they found some hot buttons, and where they couldn't find some hot buttons, they created them. Where they couldn't find legitimate fears, they generated some fears and then exploited those.

I am beyond merely disappointed; I am fearful. I am fearful because in not quite 10 years of elected position here at Queen's Park, I'm already into my third government, and I anticipate that I'll see the fourth in short order as well. I have no hesitation in indicating if you look at the pattern: 1987 through 1990, a massive Liberal majority, rejected almost summarily by voters in the province; 1990 to 1995, a massive NDP majority, suffering the same consequence come election time. Once again, as the pattern is being established, a massive Conservative government, which I tell you is certainly no less disappointing than either of the previous two governments and at the same time is regarded by people as a heck of a lot more dangerous, one which does not bode well for their future or for the future of this province.

It's also bothersome because one of the things that the leader of the then third party, Mike Harris, spoke out about frequently during question period around the New Democratic Party rule change motion was the lack of precedent for presenting this in the manner that it was rather than it being developed through a consultation process, through a series of negotiations by House leaders.

Mr Baird: Just like the Rae-Kormos years.

Mr Kormos: Well, Mike Harris pointed out that it was unprecedented that a majority government would want to ram through legislation. Mind you, as it was, and one of the things I said when I read the comments I made about the last government's rule changes was that, as a result of there having been negotiations among the three House leaders, the end result that was put forward in the Legislature by way of motion was a lot less onerous than what had been contemplated in the first place. Did I support it? No. Did the Liberal caucus support it? No. Did the Conservative caucus vote for it? Yes, although they were highly critical of it during the course of debate and during the course of question period.

Five years ago, I was expressing concern about restricting the amount of time that a backbencher can have on the floor to a mere 30 minutes. Now I find myself, only five years later, expressing concern about being restricted to a mere 10 minutes, when our ridings are getting bigger, when our constituencies are getting larger, when the issues that this assembly is dealing with are affecting more and more people in a more dramatic way and when the need for debate has never been greater.

As I indicated and as all of you know, we witnessed some disruption in the chamber earlier today. Don't think for a minute that's going to be the last. I rue the day, but I expect that response may well be to enhance security, to build metal detectors, to restrict access to public galleries, to turn this back into an elitist private club where the public can't have access because there is the perpetual fear on the part of this government of the prospect of disruptive behaviour or, frankly, behaviour of even greater concern as the result of the increasing levels of anger.

Working people aren't going to put up with the likes of Bill 131 or the resolution that is ballot item number

87. Too many people pay too great a price, sacrifice too much to build some modest rights for working people to let this government take it away. Injured workers — you witnessed an expression of some of the anger yesterday here when this government began committee hearings of three days in Toronto and a mere six days across the province for a sweeping not just reform, but a rewriting of workers' compensation legislation.

I have some great concern about what my friend from the Croatian National Home mentioned to me a week ago. Fascist, Communist, totalitarian governments, he's seen them all, but he hadn't seen anything of the like of this government. He didn't speak from a distance. He has been there, done that, and when I hear a person with that kind of experience in different parts of the world say, as he did to me, that nothing he had experienced in his life had prepared him for what this government is doing, for this government's total disregard for democratic tradition, I'm fearful too.

I plead with government backbenchers to show a little bit of the independence that they insist they are capable of, to reject this motion, to refer the matter to a legislative committee, to refer the matter as something that House leaders should be dealing with and negotiating. But this bill is all about stifling debate. This government doesn't want to hear what the opposition or the people of this province have to say about their new brand of right-wingism, and I'm fearful for our future as a result of this motion.

Mr Allan K. McLean (Simcoe East): I'm pleased to rise this evening and to say a few words with regard to the debate going on here on the motion to change the rules of the Legislature.

When I came here in 1981, there were 22 new members in that back row, and the Legislature was the best democracy that you could get in the world. When I sat here and listened to the debate, listened to the question period and listened to the answers and took part in that, I thought this was the greatest institution anywhere. Those were the days that you could hear yourself when you asked a question or when an answer was given.

From what I heard today from the member for Algoma and the member for St Catharines, obviously there is not going to be an agreement with regard to coming to an agreement on the House rules. I observed what they said, and it indicated to me that the only way it will be brought forward will be by a closure motion.

I'm not very happy that those types of things have to happen. I remember, back when the Liberals were in government, that they had about eight motions that brought in closure. When the New Democratic Party was in power, they brought in about 17 motions to bring in closure. To me, if there were a possible way the House leaders could meet and try and determine the best route and the things they could agree with, that would be the best way to go, but I don't think that will be what happens.

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I remember when in 1989 Mr Conway brought in the changes to the rules. I also know why that happened. I was here for the insurance bill, Bill 68, when the member for Welland-Thorold went on for some 17 hours, reading

phone messages indicating the great concern there was for automobile insurance. It wasn't long after this that Mr Nixon was presenting his budget and the same party did not allow him to present his budget in the Legislature. It had to be done outside the door. So it has gone on for some time whereby we have not had what we call a pleasant atmosphere in this Legislature.

When I look at what students tell me after they come here, when I listen to them, they are telling me that what goes on in this Legislature is a disgrace, and sometimes I have to agree with them. It's pretty difficult in this Legislature for a Speaker to control the House if the members do not want him or do not allow him to do that. I know that when we've had points of privilege and points of order that have gone on for some period of time, it's difficult to get control.

The only way this place will operate is by agreement of all members of the House to want to make it work. If they don't want to make it work, it's not going to happen. It doesn't matter what we do or how many changes we make, there is always going to be some way that there will be interruptions, one way or another. That's why I'm saying that if the House leaders could come to an agreement on some changes, then it would be fine. Why did the Liberals have to bring in House rule changes? Why did the NDP bring them in? Why is the Tory party bringing them in now? It doesn't matter what rules we have: If the members don't want it to work, it's never going to work.

That's exactly what I'm saying about decorum in the House. If they don't want to allow the House to work, then it won't. That's disgraceful, because this is I think the best Legislature in the world and I hate to see what's happening here. I also hated to see it when Bob Nixon couldn't present his budget. That's not the only thing that's happened around here. The Curling episode, the overnight sitting, I don't think adds anything to the Legislature. I hope there are better ways of showing some displeasure than with that type of atmosphere. Not only that, we had 10 days of filibuster with regard to the naming of streets and resolutions. What did that do for democracy? It ended up with the same thing: The bill was passed; it was done. The same thing with Nixon's budget outside: It was finally passed and it was done.

One of the things I like about this motion is that it gives members the opportunity to debate the budget. It gives them a chance to get up and talk about a budget. We haven't had that chance for quite a while, and I think that's excellent. I believe there's an opportunity, and I've seen it since the rules have changed, where the leadoff speaker would speak for an hour and a half. I think that is more than enough. I think with some negotiations there could be change. I don't understand why the House leaders can't get together and come to an agreement on some of these things. Is it that bitter in this Legislature that we can't talk any more?

Mr Bisson: Because you guys have got a pretty rigid agenda, that's why. You want to change the face of Ontario in five years.

Mr McLean: The member for Cochrane South is chirping over there now when I'm speaking. Do you know what that member said back in 1992 when we were

changing the rules? He said, "What really irks the opposition and one of the reasons they're so upset about this is that with the changes to the rules in this Legislature, if it should happen, it will totally change the strategy of the opposition."

Mr Bisson from Cochrane South said: "One of the things the opposition has to do in order to get re-elected, in order to try to defeat this government in the next election, is to try and put the case to the people of Ontario.... They have to be able to prove we're not able to do what we want as a government. But how can you make that happen if the story is absolutely not true? You do that by slowing down the process of this House."

That's what the member said when he was in government, bringing in the new rules.

The member also said that we only passed 30 bills in the legislative session. The Liberals and the Tories passed 30 bills, approximately, in their two mandates, and that's what's going to happen again. "The reason they're so upset is that the rules of the House will allow for debate." The member for Cochrane South does not want debate? That's what he said in his statement when they were bringing in the rule changes in 1992. "The rules of the House as proposed are to turn around and put some sort of rules around this place that make debate in this House somewhat more productive." That's what some people believe they're trying to do today, to try to make it more productive, but it's hard to make a place more productive if the members have the attitude that they don't want it to happen.

We had demonstrations in the gallery and we had demonstrations downstairs. How long do we put up with demonstrations in the gallery, the same people doing it? If you continue to allow that to happen, there will be chaos.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like the members to come to order. I'm trying to listen to what's being said and I can't hear because there is chirping. Please bring yourselves to order.

Mr McLean: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

When we talk about decorum, about the children who come here, about what happened today, what happened yesterday, how long can we put up with that? How long can we hear Mr Sewell say, "We want to be heard?" Well, I can tell you how Mr Sewell can be heard: Go and get elected and sit in this chamber and he can be heard. I think it's a disgrace for an individual to be hollering from the gallery. Some people agree with that. Some people encourage that. I certainly don't encourage it at all.

What this motion is doing is guaranteeing that a bill or resolution put forward by any individual MPP will ultimately be put to a vote during private members' hour. It guarantees the amount of time for debate on the budget and a requirement that the budget be voted on. That's something that should take place.

Changes to make it easier for the Legislature to work longer hours when necessary: We're sitting here tonight, we're debating this and we've debated it all day. I said at the start of my remarks that it's probably going to end up with closure. If closure is coming in, what is the debate taking place tonight for? It's because they said today that's what's going to happen.

Measures to help the legitimate business of the House not impeded by MPPs who break the rules or by frivolous procedural delays and stalling tactics: If the members want to make the House work, they can, and if they want to be obstructive, then that's what they're going to do.

Some of the main points that are being changed are points of privilege. I think that is a major improvement.

"21(a) Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually, conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom.

"(b) Once the Speaker finds that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists it shall be taken into consideration immediately.

"(c) Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give the Speaker a written statement of the point at least one hour prior to raising the question in the House."

I think there are very few members here who would not agree that the Speaker should have that warning if you want to get up and make a point of personal privilege. I think that's only appropriate. I've seen many members here in the past who have a legitimate point of personal privilege. They have given the Speaker a copy of it ahead of time, it was proceeded with and the Speaker returned and got a reply back.

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Basically those are some of the things I've seen that need to be changed. I believe that increased accountability and efficiency in the Legislature is something we all should be working towards.

The extra time to allow for the budget debate and the time that we should be dealing with some of the major issues that are before us — we spent a day here in this Legislature deciding that we're going to sit at night. We knew we were going to sit at night. The opposition knew we were going to sit at night and it was a voice vote at the end of the day. Why did we spend a whole afternoon debating whether we're going to sit at night or not when we knew we were going to sit anyway?

When you talk about the loss of time in here, I think it's important that those are the main issues that we should be looking at and that's what this is trying to change. I also say that 40 minutes is probably long enough to speak first as the leadoff speaker. I believe that —

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Why have any debate at all? We know they're all going to pass.

Mr McLean: No, you don't know it's all going to pass. But normally the government of the day has a chance to govern and they should have the ability to put their agenda forward and to be able to deal with it.

Those are the main issues I wanted to talk about. I just want to say that if you want to make the House work, it'll work, but if you want to be obstructive, then that's going to happen too. From what I've seen of the House leaders' meeting and what I heard from the two House leaders today, there's not going to be an agreement on these rules. So the bottom line will be, there will be a closure motion.

Mr Frank Mclash (Kenora): Surprise, surprise.

Mr McLean: That's exactly what we're saying. That's what they want and that's exactly what they'll get.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me say I agree with the last member to this extent: that the only way the proper decorum and the proper procedures are taking place in this House is if there is some level of consensus around the rules. If one party comes in and merely says, "We are the government that's got 82 seats and you the opposition only have 45 seats. We can outvote you at any time and these are the rules we're going to play with from now on, take it or leave it," that's not the kind of consensus-building that we need around getting the rules changed here, and it's not going to work. You're going to have the kind of demonstrations not only inside the House but also outside of the House that we've seen here really for the last two years on numerous different occasions.

Democracy is not a neat thing, it's not a tidy thing. Sometimes this notion that we can run government the way we run business is totally inappropriate, because if government were just a business, there are many functions and many operations which help people on a day-to-day basis you simply wouldn't be involved in because business is out there to make money, and rightfully so. Government is involved in a totally different enterprise. Democracy may not always be neat and tidy and it can't always be run in a businesslike fashion. I think that's where this government is totally wrong.

I think in the long run societies and peoples are judged by the way in which they treat their minorities, whether we're talking about differences in creed, colour or race or whether we're talking about the minority opinion that exists in a jurisdiction or a province at any one time, such as there exists right now. When you were elected, you elected the majority of the members. I'll grant you that much, but that doesn't mean that the minority opinion that is representative of the 45 members in the opposition isn't worth listening to. I think that ultimately you will be judged as to how well you are listening to us and how much you are willing to modify the proposals that you bring forward on an ongoing basis to adhere to the views of the minority.

Of course, the other interesting thing is that you weren't elected by the overall majority of the people in this province. You were elected by 45% of the people in this province and there are 55% who voted against your government, your style and what you stood for. I realize that in our parliamentary system, the way it operates currently, you got the vast majority of the seats, but you certainly didn't get the vast majority of the people of Ontario behind you to basically implement the type of program that you are implementing and that you have implemented over the last couple of years.

I guess the first bill was Bill 26. We keep coming back to Bill 26, and I know there were some catcalls by some of the members in the back bench of the government today, that that was somehow a travesty to democracy. I can tell you that most people out there who I've spoken to in the last couple of years viewed the results of Bill 26 and what happened at that time, the sit-in here and the aftermath and the public hearings that we had, in a totally, completely different light. They see the fact that

we stood up to you and basically didn't accept the fact that you were only going to give two weeks of public hearings here in the city of Toronto right before Christmas 1995 as being adequate to deal with such a huge omnibus bill.

They agree with us, the fact that we stood up to you and said, "Look, we want more time to debate this bill, we want more public hearings, we want hearings outside Toronto" — in fact, we did have two weeks of hearings outside Toronto as well — as a positive thing. The mere fact is that as a result of those hearings and as a result of the different input that was received from many different sources throughout the province, over 150 amendments were made to a bill that, in our opinion, was still extremely flawed at the time it was passed.

You agreed that your own bill, that according to you was near perfect when you presented it to us, needed 150 amendments. Those amendments would not have come forward if it had not been for the fact that the opposition stood up to you and said, "No, the kind of hearing process that you want in this particular case isn't enough; we need more than that." You can shake your head and say that isn't the case; the fact still is that's what happened. There were 150 of your amendments that you brought forward that were required in order to bring some sanity to that bill, which of course we still think was grossly overdone.

It was exactly the same thing with the megacity bill. You talk about the ultimate hypocrisy. You're the government that on a number of occasions in your Common Sense Revolution has said: "We want to institute referenda. We want the people to have a say over various issues and various items." The referendum held here in the city of Toronto and its adjoining five other cities, in Etobicoke, Scarborough, North York, York and East York — those people overwhelmingly, by 75% to 80% in some municipalities, rejected the notion of one megacity.

What did you do? The Premier said right in the House, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs said on a number of occasions in the House as well: "We don't care what the people said. We don't care what conclusion those referenda came to. We don't care that the people of Ontario or the people of Metro Toronto don't want a megacity. We're going to implement that megacity." That's what that was all about.

How about your own members who aren't in the House today? I'm sure that they would be embarrassed to have these kinds of quotes read back to them, yet they said it. What did the member for Wentworth North say? He was quoted as saying: "There's something wrong when the Premier and a couple of unelected staff people can run the entire province. It's a dictatorship." This isn't from a member of the opposition; this is from a member of the government itself.

What did the member for Oakville South say? "Mike Harris has got to realize this is still a democracy and not a dictatorship." The member for Grey-Owen Sound, a man whom I have known for many, many years in municipal circles as well, said, "You have to be nicey-nice and kiss...if you want to get ahead." You can fill in the blank. Those are comments from your own backbenchers. I can understand the sense of frustration that

some of the backbenchers have. They want to get up. As the member for Scarborough East said, "I thought I could speak on every bill."

Wouldn't it be nice if we heard every member on every bill? I will tell you, even with these rule changes and with the time limits that you have imposed in these rules, you will never hear from more than about 20 or 25 members on any given bill. Let's get away from this notion that somehow you can get every member up on every bill and that this somehow accomplishes that.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: You said it, friend, and you're wrong, because the kind of time limits that you've set in here of five hours in most situations simply will not allow that to happen.

I went through the bill. The member for Nepean talked about how this bill creates more democracy. I will just go through a number of sections, about 20 sections or so, because I'm sure the people out there watching for the last six hours or so must be saying to themselves: "What's this all about? How come the government is saying this is more democracy and the opposition is saying there is less democracy?"

2120

Let's talk about the real issues in this bill. Let's not talk in generalities, let's just talk about what kind of rule changes you're actually proposing, and then let's have the people of Ontario decide whether these rules are for the betterment of this House and for the betterment of the democratic system.

The first one is a very interesting one. It's a change to standing order 9(c), and that states that:

"The House may meet between the hours of 6:30 pm and 9:30 pm on the passage of a government motion for that purpose. Such motion may apply to one day or to more than one day. The question on such a motion shall be put forthwith and without amendment or debate."

Now there's real democracy for you. A government member, a House leader can just get up whenever he feels like it and say, "I move," and we'll have to vote on it right away without amendment or debate. We may sit on any particular day until 9:30 that evening, without giving any reason or any justification for it, because there's to be no debate and no amendment to it.

I would think one of the basic principles of democracy is that when somebody puts something forward, when somebody wants to change a rule, when somebody wants to implement an unusual procedure, at least you have the opportunity to hear each and every party address that particular issue, but that's not what this particular amendment says. It just says, "The question on such a motion shall be put forthwith and without amendment or debate." That's what this is about: no amendments, no debate, we just vote.

Let's go to the next section, which is 9(c.1). Where a motion under (c) has been moved, "the motion shall indicate the business to be considered, the time or times reserved for such business, and any special procedure to be followed."

This deals with private members' business. This is time allocation, but it's time allocation for private members' business to the absolutely worst degree because this

doesn't say whether you can talk about it for an hour, two hours; no, it could be five minutes, it could be 10 minutes, it could be a minute, it could be no time at all, because it specifically states that the motion itself will include the time or times reserved for such business without putting any kind of limitation on it. So you could bring a bill forward and not have any time for debate at all. Read it. It's right on page 17 of the orders issued on this past Monday.

Let's go on to the next one, standing order 10(a): "...if the government advises the Speaker that the public interest requires the House to meet at an earlier time, the Speaker shall give notice that the House shall meet at such time, and thereupon the House shall meet to transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time...."

We're going to have the situation where we're not going to have any kind of a House calendar. Any time that the government House leader feels the House should meet he just speaks to the Speaker and the Speaker will simply call the House back any time at all. Is that more democracy, without any debate either in the House or between the House leaders? I don't think that's more democracy. I think that's a dictatorial approach whereby one side, namely, the government in power with the majority of the seats, can at a moment's notice call the House back.

Next, standing order 13 will be changed. This is also on page 17 of the Orders and Notices of this past Monday: "(b.1) The Speaker may rule on a point of privilege or a point of order when it is raised without allowing any discussion apart from the member raising the point."

Quite frankly, that is probably another very dictatorial move; not probably, it definitely is. You know on almost any issue that's raised in the House there are at least two and possibly three different opinions or views. We all come from a different philosophical background, each one of the three parties, and we may be approaching the problems in a slightly different way.

What this is saying is that because somebody raises a point of order or a point of privilege, the other two parties or their House leaders can have absolutely no input in providing the Speaker with the best kind of information that can possibly be made available to him in order to make the proper kind of ruling. That's what you're saying here. You're saying that nobody else other than the person who raises those points can possibly have any input into that.

I can tell you there have been many, many times in this House when all of us have been on our best decorum and different points of order or points of privilege have been raised, when different members have had different input in a particular situation that the Speaker then takes into account when he makes his ruling.

Next, we've got standing order 15(b) that is going to be changed. It states: "When a member is named by the Speaker, if the offence is a minor one, the Speaker may order the member to withdraw for the balance of the sessional day; but if the matter appears to the Speaker to be of a more serious nature, the Speaker shall put the question on the motion being made, no amendment, adjournment or debate being allowed, 'that such member

be suspended from the service of the House,'" and such suspension on that motion shall not exceed eight sessional days.

What you're doing there is setting up the fact that even in procedural matters you are going to win every vote, which includes the expulsion of a member from this chamber for up to eight days. Read what it says: "the Speaker shall put the question on the motion being made, no amendment, adjournment or debate being allowed." That will be a question put to this House, and you can just guess what a particular vote will be on that if it happens to be a member of the opposition. It means you can turf out a member of the opposition just about any time you want. Is that democracy? Certainly not where I come from.

Next, standing order 21(c) you want to change. The member for Simcoe East has already raised this issue.

"Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give the Speaker a written statement of the point at least one hour prior to raising the question in the House."

The reason he's saying that is that in a lot of situations where a procedural point is being raised, the Speaker is sometimes tipped off about that beforehand. But to make it a necessity that somebody in effect gives the Speaker one hour's notice of a point of privilege that affects not only the privileges of that individual member but possibly the privileges of all the members of this House is, in my view, an absurdity. It just doesn't make any sense at all. Why is that necessary?

If the Speaker feels that he needs time to deliberate on something, as he has done many times over the past two years, he will simply recess the House for five or 10 minutes or half an hour and retire to his chambers, and undoubtedly work with the Clerk and other people as well to get different input from the table and make his ruling. But to make it an absolute requirement that he be given one hour's notice of the matter in writing doesn't make any sense.

The other one, of course, is the one dealing with standing orders 24 and 25, this whole notion that 90 minutes is too long, in your opinion, for an opening statement or speech by the critics of the different parties. I suggest to you that in most cases currently, in the vast majority of situations certainly over the last year or so, that 90 minutes is usually split between two or three members of that particular caucus, and there may very well be situations where it has got to be longer than that. We've had a perfect example here today.

What you're suggesting with your 20-minute rule is that in all the speeches we heard today, somehow the last 10 minutes of what anybody has said here, including your own members, isn't of any importance. The member shakes his head yes. That member hasn't spoken yet and we'll see if he adheres to his 20 minutes.

The other thing you've got to remember is that we're talking here about government backbenchers wanting to have more say in what goes on in this House and having a greater opportunity to get up and give speeches on various items. From what I've noticed, from a practical viewpoint, in many, many situations, the government House

leader or the different cabinet ministers simply don't want backbenchers to get up and talk about a particular piece of legislation, or if they do, it is from prepared texts that are prepared by the ministries involved.

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I know there's a lot of chuckling going on because you know what I'm saying is correct and it's true. In many situations it's the government whip or House leader himself who has decided, "We're only going to put up one speaker or maybe two speakers or three speakers and nobody else on our side will speak, in order to move the process along."

Mr Crozier: It'll still happen.

Mr Gerretsen: As the member behind me stated, that's certainly still going to happen.

The other thing is, it says that following the speech of each member — this is a change to standing order 25 — after the first five hours of debate, every speaker will not be allowed to speak for more than 10 minutes. It may very well be that particular speaker at that point of time may have much more to say on that.

The other one that I find very curious is standing order 28(d). That's the one that states: "Members are not compelled to vote and those who wish to abstain should remain in their seats when asked to rise and record their vote. An abstention shall not be entered in the Votes and Proceedings or Journals." I must admit that I don't know exactly what's behind this situation, but we're here elected to make decisions. That's what the people have elected us for, to make decisions. I suppose if you don't want to vote on something and if you don't want to come to the House on that particular day, that's between you and your own caucus and your own whip and House leader and whoever else is involved in that. But for people to actually sit in this House and not be required to vote and to sort of be passive participants, I have some great difficulty with.

I have no idea why this is here. We've been given absolutely no explanation, by the House leader or by the first proponent of these ideas or all the subsequent speakers, why this is here. It almost offends, to my way of thinking, democratic principles, that people here are elected to make decisions. To actively abstain when you're in the House I don't think is proper and correct.

The change to standing order 30, in which basically oral questions are going to be dealt with after members' statements, reports by committees, introductions of bills, motions etc, of course this is mainly done in order that for the government side there are absolutely no surprises. What the government backbench members simply don't understand is that the power an opposition has at times is purely to delay to allow you a second sober thought.

Let me just quote something to you. It's been quoted before but there may be some people out there watching right now who haven't heard this, so I think it bears repeating. Let's just hear what a House leader, both of this government and when he was in opposition he was the House leader as well, the now Minister of Finance, said with respect to the NDP rule change on June 22, 1992. This is what Mr Eves said at that point in time:

"I think one has to understand that the only way opposition — not just opposition members but any public

opposition to any proposed piece of legislation — can be effectively dealt with or talked about under our system of government, under the parliamentary system of government, is through the opposition parties' ability to debate, and yes, on occasion even stall or slow down progress of a particular bill, and that has worked very effectively over the years against governments of all political stripes."

He knows what he's talking about. He knew it back on June 22, 1992, and I hope he remembers these words today as well; that was almost exactly five years ago. I think he's right and I certainly hope he will have some influence with the government House leader.

There's another very interesting comment that I was made aware of. It's by one Norman Sterling in a letter that he wrote. It was read into Hansard by Ernie Eves, as a matter of fact, on the same day, June 22, 1992. The now Minister of Environment was correct when he stated: "Over the past six years in opposition I have been successful in forcing the government of the day to accept some amendments to their legislation. My only tool was to delay or to threaten to delay. What sense is there for me to bother to debate if I have no means to make them listen?"

That's exactly one of the roles of the opposition, to make you listen, because, believe me, you might think you've got all the answers to all the problems in the world, you actually may think that — I think you're foolish if you do, because I don't think anybody's got all the answers in the world. I don't have all the answers in the world and neither does our caucus, and neither do any of the parties here, but there may be other ways of looking at resolving problems or at solving problems as well. Maybe that sober second thought might just want you to take some of the real edges off your proposed legislation.

Much has been said here today that we're just adopting the rules of the House of Commons. As has already been pointed out, the House of Commons is a totally different situation. There you're dealing with 300 members, not 130. There you're dealing with a chamber that, after it passes a particular bill, it will be referred to the Senate where it's given another chance for sober second thought that we certainly lack here once a bill's been given third reading. By the way, in that particular case, opposition days number 20 per year, which doesn't come anywhere close to the number of opposition days we have here.

Let me just go on. I see I've only got five minutes left and there's so much to talk about. Here's another interesting one. I'll just pick them one at a time. You're talking about more democracy and I'm showing you how there's less democracy. Here's an interesting one, standing order 55, a very short one: "Before the adjournment of the House on each Thursday during the session, the government House leader may announce the business for the following week." You know what it says currently? "Shall." Why should that no longer be a requirement? Why say "may"? Because you really don't want the opposition to know what you're going to deal with?

Here's another interesting one. Standing order 58 is going to be changed. It states in the proposed change, "All main estimates shall be presented to the House after

completion of the budget debate but not later than 12 sessional days following the presentation of the budget....” You know what you want to change it to? Five days. You want to limit the time. That’s more democracy? Not where I come from.

Here’s another one, standing order 62(c), where you talk about “after three hours of debate” the orders for concurrence, if the debate did not commence as the first of the day can be passed. You know what it is currently? Not three hours but six hours. Is that more democracy? That’s what I heard earlier here today, that these rule changes are about more democracy. It sure doesn’t sound that way to me.

Let’s look at another one. I could talk about dozens and dozens more examples but I’ve only got four minutes left so I’ve got to hurry up. Standing order 97: You propose that it be changed to read, “No member shall have more than four questions on the order paper at any one time.” Right now there’s no limit.

People out there probably are wondering: “What’s this all about? What are these questions on the order paper?” The questions on the order paper, quite frankly, give the opposition, or basically any member in the House, an opportunity to find out what’s going on in particular departments.

Let’s just read from some of them that just happen to be in this particular edition, which we get on a daily basis. We get questions here from NDP members, questions from Liberal members. I’m not sure whether there are any here from government members or not, but I doubt it very much.

It talks about, for example, “Would the Minister of Transportation provide a list of ministry contracts allocated to private sector firms that did not adhere to a standard tendering practice between July 1, 1995, to April 18, 1997.” I just took one anywhere, but those are the kinds of questions that are asked of different ministries to get information about their tendering contracts that are out there and about different practices they’re involved in. Those are the kind of questions people are interested in. Sure, some members have as many as 40 or 50 or 100 of them. So what? They want that information so they can better serve their residents.

What do you say in your proposed newly democratic rules? Not New Democrat rules but the newly — I think you know what I’m saying. In this so-called new democracy you’re talking about you’re saying that no member can have more than four of these on the order paper. Let me just go on.

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Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): How long do they have to answer now?

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, that’s another good one. I’m glad you asked that one because I was almost going to skip over that one.

Mr Crozier: That’s the important part.

Mr Gerretsen: That’s right. It’s standing order 97(d). The new proposed answering time is 45 sessional days that a ministry has to answer the most simple question about the operations of a department or the kind of contracts that have been signed — 45 sessional days. I don’t

know what that is in real time, but it seems to me that’s probably close to, let’s say, three months or so.

You know what it currently is? Fourteen calendar days. That’s about more democracy, where you’ve got a constituent who may be involved in a particular business and they want to know who got the contract and for how much in a particular situation and they’ve got to wait for three months, according to your new rules, to get those kinds of answers, rather than the 14 calendar days that is currently the case? I could go on and on and on. So don’t talk to me about more democracy. You’re taking away democracy, and that’s what this is all about.

As I stated earlier, what this is really all about is how a society is judged by its own people and by the people outside of that society or outside of that province or outside of that country. I think the true test is the manner in which minorities and minority opinion, as reflected in our parliamentary democracy through the opposition parties, are dealt with.

The rules that you’re proposing limit that, and not only limit that, they are draconian and they are in essence about the kind of government, the dictatorial kind of government, that you’ve operated here for the last two years.

The Speaker (Hon Chris Stockwell): Before we move on, the member for Kingston and The Islands, the last comment was out of order and I’d ask you to withdraw.

Mr Gerretsen: What was the last comment?

The Speaker: The dictatorial government.

Mr Gerretsen: Okay. All right. I withdraw that.

The Speaker: That was really helpful that you withdrew that. Thank you so much. Further debate.

Mr Bisson: We have but 30 minutes to debate, as the rules allow now, this particular issue that’s before us, which is the whole question of the government coming by and changing the rules of the House.

Let me just say out front, it’s always the same. Governments come forward, my government did, this government does and the future governments probably will do the same, with rule changes for a fairly particular reason. Governments, especially ideological governments, like to see their agenda passed through, and they don’t like to see any kind of meddling in their agenda in regard to trying to slow it down or trying to do anything to thwart the will of the majority, in this case the majority government, by opposition parties.

Clearly what’s happening here today is the government has rules, and it’s very simple; the rules are about one thing. It’s about giving more power to the cabinet of Ontario and to the Premier of the province to do what they want as a government. That’s what this is all about.

As much as we want to debate, as much as we want to talk about high principles of democracy, we want to talk about anything, the reality is this is all about Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and other people within the cabinet saying: “We need to have more power. We need to have more power to exercise our will as a cabinet over this Legislature.” That’s basically what’s happening over here.

It brings me directly to the point, which is that one of the things I’ve reflected on over the years I’ve been here is just how little sometimes this Legislature really has relevance to anything that is really close to being demo-

cratic. Every election, every four or five years, people go out and elect local members in their constituencies to come and represent the constituency to the best of their ability here at the Legislature, and the people of our constituency really believe that we can come here and we can make a lot of difference.

The reality is that, yes, in our ridings we do a lot of work to represent our constituencies when it comes to how they interact with government. But when it comes to the government's agenda, when it comes to government putting bills before this House, in reality, the only people who really have a lot of influence here is the Premier of the province and the cabinet. They decide everything.

What backbenchers in the government feel or what backbenchers in the opposition feel about the legislation being good, bad or indifferent really has no relevance on what happens around here because in the end the cabinet gets what the cabinet wants. What the government is doing here, quite simply, is putting forward rules that allow it to pass legislation through this House a lot more quickly.

Does that surprise me? No, not from the government of Mike Harris. This government, since 1995, has demonstrated over and over again just how undemocratic they are in their approach to how they govern. We have seen all kinds of examples in this Legislature how this government has put forward legislation with not a lot of consideration for what the points of view are of the citizens of Ontario. I can't count how many times I've seen in this Legislature people come before committees, people try to meet one on one with ministers, people even come and protest in front of Queen's Park, and sometimes inside, to express their displeasure about what the government is doing on a particular issue.

This government has demonstrated I think over and over again that it has an agenda and it's going to carry that agenda come hell or high water. It doesn't matter what the people of the province say, it doesn't matter what the opposition says, the Mike Harris government is going to do what the Mike Harris government wants to do, not necessarily what they campaigned on but what they feel is the right thing to do as a government.

There lies the problem. This Legislature, in my view, is supposed to be a place where people from across Ontario come and represent their constituencies to be able to express points of view. For what reason? So that we can all sort of learn by the collective knowledge of this assembly and govern more wisely on behalf of the people of Ontario. That's what I certainly hope we would strive for as members of this assembly. If we're here today debating rule changes in the House, I would much rather see us talking about other things. Let's talk about, how do you really reform this Legislature? How do you reform the Legislature of the province of Ontario so that you truly have a democracy, so that you truly have something that works for the people of Ontario and not rules that work for the cabinet or rules that work for the members of this assembly?

In the end, that's what we're supposed to be here to do. We're supposed to be here to represent the people of the province and we're supposed to be here in order to express their views and to try to give people a voice in

the process of governing. What happens in this place, I sometimes think, is quite to the contrary. I think back to the debates that we've had in this House around Bill 103, the megacity bill. We had a process that went on for almost a year where the Citizens for Local Democracy and others, the mayors, the councillors, elected representatives of the cities of Toronto and Scarborough and others were really upset about the government's move, unilaterally, on its own, without really the support of the people of Toronto to do the big merger and do what was called the big megacity in the city of Toronto.

You had a process where the people of Toronto spoke out by way of a referendum and overwhelmingly rejected the agenda of the government. In the end, what happened? The government did what it wanted. The government said: "Damn the whole issue of what people have to say in the city of Toronto. We're the Mike Harris government, we know better, we're smarter. We know what's good medicine for you. It might taste bad now, but we're going to shove it down your throat, like it or not. You'll see; tomorrow morning you'll feel better."

And there lies really the problem. That's not what this place is supposed to be all about. I always thought that the Legislature or the House of Commons or any elected government is about trying to find a way, on behalf of all the people here that we represent, to govern wisely and a way to govern so that the will of the people is expressed and seen in the laws that pass in this Legislature. I think that if we are having a debate today on rule changes, we should be really trying to have a debate here about how, in a meaningful way, we change the Legislature, how it operates, how the rules of this place should operate for the people and not for the cabinet, and quite possibly how elections are carried out in this province.

The system of parliamentary democracy that we are governed by is one of the oldest systems of democracy that we know, and it has served the people of Ontario and the people of the Commonwealth well over the years. But one of the failings of our British parliamentary system is that it has not been very good at responding to change and keeping itself modern when it comes to how a democracy should function.

When the people who sat down and devised the system of democratic government called parliamentary democracy, what drove them and what was important to them and the issues of the day were much different from what we're faced with as legislators today. Back in those days a lot of people who now have the right to vote didn't. Women didn't vote. People without property didn't vote and couldn't even run for office. They went to the House of Commons in England at the time and passed laws for their own benefit, and as well as for the benefit of the people to a certain degree. But what has not happened in our system of parliamentary democracy, in my view, is to have a real hard look at how we modernize a parliamentary democracy to work for the people it is supposed to represent. I want to take the 20 minutes I've got to put forward some of the suggestions I think might be useful in the province in Ontario about how this place works.

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The first thing I think we really need to do is look at how the legislative process itself works. One of the

problems we have today is that the whole legislative process is really driven only by the cabinet. As it stands now, the cabinet decides when a bill will be brought into the House, what the bill is going to be about, how the bill is going to be written, when it's going to be debated, and even who is going to speak on the bill from the government side. They decide how long the bill will be in committee, they decide where the bill will travel if it's a travelling committee. They decide, in the end, will there be any amendments to the bill, yes or no. They decide collectively, and sometimes individually as ministers, the entire legislative process. What we say as members of the opposition, or what backbenchers say, in this case the Tory caucus, has very little significance at times as to what the bill ends up looking like, because it's the will of the cabinet that's followed.

Why don't we enter into a debate in this Legislature on changing the legislative process? Why don't we have a legislative process that gives people a voice so that the government bills reflect an actual need within our communities, within the community of Ontario? That's one of the problems we have with the present legislative process.

The second problem we have is that it's a very confrontational process by its very nature. Once the bill is tabled by cabinet into the House, the government must defend and the opposition must oppose, and that's basically how this place runs. I don't think that, quite frankly, serves the public well and I don't think it serves this Legislature well. Maybe what we should be trying to do is say: "Let's change the legislative process to make it work for the people. How can we do that?"

One suggestion is that we could try to revise the legislative process in such a way that we say a bill is tabled in the House at first reading. What you would be tabling is actually not the bill in detail but a white paper, so you would have an actual debate in the House about the merits of the issue. We, the members, the elected representatives of our constituencies, would then go back to our constituency and talk to the people and the stakeholders who are affected by the legislation, and then come back and have debate in the Legislature about the pros and cons on the issue so that the government doesn't end up being in a position of having to defend and the opposition does not necessarily have to oppose.

Then that issue could be referred to a standing committee that would be responsible for either drafting the legislation itself or possibly giving the framework for how the legislation is to be drafted. In that way you would see probably less confrontation when it comes to how we as a Legislature operate, and possibly we'd be able to get stronger legislation for the people of Ontario. Members of the assembly, quite frankly, could end up having a much larger role to play.

One of the ideas that was batted around in one of the groups I've been dealing with about how you reform that is you take a look at possibly even using referendums by some mechanism. If the government is trying to do something that is not within its mandate, possibly a consultative-type referendum would be used to give people some voice about the merits of the bill: Should it or should it not go forward?

I'm not a big fan of referendums per se. I think referendums used unwisely can be very dangerous in a democracy. I think there are some examples in California we should pay heed to because there have been some cases where referendums I don't think have worked quite well. The point I'm trying to make here is that we need to try to find a way to get the legislative process to work for the people of the province and that members play a role.

One of the other things we could take a look at is the way we elect members. In this system of parliamentary democracy — and I point out, it's only Canada and Great Britain of all the parliamentary democracies that elect people the way we do here. We say you have an election every four or five years, and it's the first past the post. If I run in a campaign and I've got 38% of the vote and everybody got less vote than me, never mind that I didn't get 50% of the vote, I'm elected as the member.

Then you come into this Legislature and the amount of seats is based on who won in their constituencies. The effect of that is that if you go back and look at the results of elections in Ontario in the past over 100 years, it would seldom be the case that a majority government actually got elected by a majority of the voters of Ontario.

In the case of Mike Harris, he was elected with somewhere around 40% of the vote, yet has over 60% of the seats in the Legislature and, in effect, has a huge majority to do what he wants, even though a majority of the people of Ontario did not vote for Mike Harris. In the government before him, Bob Rae, it was the same case: 38% of the total electorate voted for NDP candidates in the election of 1990, and at the end of that process we, the New Democrats, ended up with a Legislature controlling about 60% of the seats. That I think is a weakness in our system.

We should take a look at what has been in Germany and in Australia and in places like New Zealand, where they have moved to proportional representation. Proportional representation, simply put, says that at the end of the election — it doesn't matter how you do it, but at the end of the election, the number of seats you have in the Legislature is based on the percentage of support your party got in the last election.

The idea would be, in the election of 1995, the Mike Harris government would have no more than 43% of the vote if that's what they got in the previous election. They would still be the government, they would still control cabinet, Mike Harris would still be the Premier, but the big difference is that the members in the government, and the cabinet especially, would have to work with all members of the House to be able to pass its legislation.

The government would not have been able to do Bill 103, something that was not supported by the people of the cities of Toronto, because never would Mike Harris have got support of the majority of this House to pass that bill. The government could not have, I think, passed Bill 26, the omnibus bill that gave the government far-sweeping powers and the cabinet more power than had ever been given to any cabinet in the history of this province.

We need to take a look at my view about how we get this Legislature to function for the people, and maybe

proportional representation is one of the issues we can take a look at about how this place works. Otherwise, if we continue down the path we are on now, we end up, by its very nature, having majority governments elected by a minority of the people that they are supposed to represent, and governments with huge amounts of power deciding what they want to do with little or no regard for what the people of the province they represent are actually willing to put up with. I think we need to try to address some of these issues to make our democracy work better.

I recognize, and I've talked to some of the members in this Legislature about PR before, when you talk about proportional representation in Ontario, you talk about it in Canada, period. It's not a concept that has been talked about a lot in political debate and it's probably one that will take some time to get people to understand and to support. But I think if we're not trying to find a way to modernize this Legislature to make it work for the people, we're letting the people down. We need to try to find a way to make democracy work and not have a Legislature that works in the way it does now, quite the contrary, where you have a government that basically does things on its own.

The government is suggesting by way of these rules to do a number of things. Some of the proposed rule changes make some sense; some of them don't. But let's not forget what they're about: They're about giving the cabinet the power it needs to be able to pass its agenda. For example, one of the things that it's saying it wants to be able to do — right now the way it works, for people to understand, is that for a government to pass a bill, technically they have to have three days of debate at second reading and three days at third reading. A sessional day is considered like one full day. If you come into the House on Monday and you have the first day of debate at second reading, that's considered one sessional day, so it would take six of those days to be able to pass a bill as it is now. I think that's far too fast.

One of the problems we have in this Legislature is that bills go through this House at a breakneck speed and the people of Ontario don't have time to really contemplate what the government is doing, and even, equally as important, the legislators don't have time to look at the bills in any kind of detail to say: "Are there truly some problems in the mechanics of how this bill operates? Can the bill be made better?"

What the government proposes to do by way of these rules is to introduce a bill at first reading, and at the end, have the bill passed by Thursday. How does that help democracy? It doesn't help democracy. I think it gives the cabinet just that much more power. But even more troubling, how can we assure ourselves as legislators that the bill is sound, that the bill actually works, that the bill does what it's supposed to and it does it in some sort of an effective way and we don't have bad legislation?

We have all been parties to legislation passing through this House too quickly. I've seen this government pass bills through this House so fast that they've made errors within their own bills so that afterwards, to try to deal with it, they've had to fix a bill after the fact. I don't think that's good for the government. I don't think that's

good for the people. This is not indicative of just this government. This has happened before. We're trying to do too much too quickly to put our stamp on what we want to be remembered as, as governments. In the end, that's probably not a good thing. In the end, we probably need to have more time to take a look at some of these bills to make sure they work.

2200

I said in 1992 and I'll say it again: Rule changes in themselves — we have to understand what they're all about. They're about basically the government taking power unto itself to be able to pass what it wants by way of legislation.

The other thing I want to comment on: I listened intently as our former Speaker, Mr McLean, spoke to this issue. He raised two points that I thought were rather fascinating. One of them he repeated over and over again. I wrote it down because I thought it was kind of interesting. He said, "Why should we debate bills ad infinitum if we know in the end that the bill's going to pass as written?" That's pretty interesting, for a government member to get up in the House and to say that, because what he's saying is that basically it doesn't matter what anybody says, the government's not listening and it's going to do what it wants. I thought that was a rather interesting comment for a former Speaker to make in this House.

The other one he made, which I thought was even more interesting, was that it was really a disgrace when the people of this province came to the House and protested their displeasure against the government. I'm sorry, democracy is about giving people the right to express their support or express displeasure about a government. For a former Speaker of this House to come in here and to talk about people protesting as a bad thing, as something we should not tolerate as legislators, is really indicative of what this government is all about, which is, "If you don't agree with me, step aside or we're going to run over you." That's a really sad statement for the former Speaker of this House to be making.

People in a democracy have the right to express themselves. If they feel so inclined, they have the right to protest. We need to accept that. I don't like it. When I was in government I didn't like hearing people say bad things about my government, but I accepted it because they have the right to do that. For the government to somehow say that we shouldn't be tolerating people coming to this Legislature and protesting their displeasure is a pretty bad comment to make, especially from somebody who is a former Speaker of this House.

Democracy is about people having expression. If people feel they can't express themselves, it's a pretty sad thing. The other thing is on this whole thing of expression. Far too often I hear across the province —

Mr Kormos: Please, Speaker, there is no quorum.

The Speaker: Quorum?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South.

Mr Bisson: As I was saying, this Legislature is supposed to be working for the people of the province. I

don't see how these rule changes in the end are going to be any better when it comes to being able to get the people of the province to have some confidence in their Legislature. We need to take a look at options about how we reform the Legislature and how we reform the electoral process to make it work for people so that they can see themselves in the Legislature. That's really the true test. If people don't see themselves in this place, feeling as if they're represented, it doesn't meet the test.

As to the other point I was saying about this government being dictatorial by nature, there's a comment I hear over and over again throughout the province as I travel to communities and speak to leaders, executive directors and others, of various groups that are dependent on provincial funding. There's really a fear on the part of a lot of people who are dependent on government for funding for their organizations about how they may be punished if they happen to say something or do something that's in opposition to this government.

That really troubles me, because basically this government has put the fear of God into many people who run organizations in this province and not being able to raise any kind of an oppositional voice to what they are doing. I remember in the first year this government was formed, the minister for women's issues, Dianne Cunningham, actually had a number of people in her constituency office and made that comment, that if people raise an oppositional voice to this government, that would not be a good thing when it comes to their funding.

It's something that's indicative and shows this government quite frankly doesn't like opposition, doesn't like people opposing what they're doing. When they do, they're prepared to use any tactic to stop what they're doing in opposition to them. If you're the head of an organization, you threaten their funding. If they're an opposition party in the House, you change the rules. And somehow this is better for democracy? I don't think so. With that I'd like to terminate my comments.

Mr Grimmett: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the proposed changes to the standing orders, which I will be supporting. I want to perhaps begin by commenting on the reaction I had upon coming to this place, having served in a variety of organizations that had procedural rules. Being a lawyer in a small town, I had a couple of public duties — being the only lawyer in the community, actually. One was to be the butt of all the lawyers jokes in town and the other duty was to serve as the local expert on procedural matters in just about any organization I belonged to or that people wanted me to join. I had the experience of being involved in procedural matters on a service club, on the school board when I was a member of the district of Muskoka school board, and also in several community organizations such as the Muskoka lakes fastball league and student councils when I was in high school as well.

Interjection: Were you a lawyer then too?

Mr Grimmett: I wasn't a lawyer then. I also had the pleasure of course of attending in court. That is another matter and I'll leave that aside because that may not help my argument this evening. I appeared at township councils on many occasions. I have to say that before I came here all of the organizations I was involved with in

dealing with procedure had as their main goal in establishing procedures that polite, orderly discussion be the order of the day, and when there was debate, that it be substantive and that it be polite. I would say that polite discussion was the rule in all of those organizations. Disorder was very uncommon.

However, I have to say that in this place, disorder at times is the rule. Calm debate is the exception. I have had some frustration, having served on the Legislative Assembly committee, at the lack of concern by members about the need to amend the standing orders to deal with the problems of order and decorum. It's in that light that I'd like to take a quick review of some particular sections that are being dealt with in the government notice of motion dealing with the standing order changes.

First, I'd like to start with standing order 1(b) which up until now has been a fairly vague suggestion that the Speaker or Chair in making the rulings shall base decisions "on the usages and precedents of the Legislature and parliamentary tradition." The proposed wording in the revised standing order 1(b) states: "The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members." It also indicates that, "The standing orders shall not be interpreted or applied in a manner that permits a member to obtain a procedural or a tactical advantage by contravening a standing order."

I would say that in coming to Toronto and representing the people of Muskoka-Georgian Bay, that kind of approach is one I'm sure the people I represent would want me to support and it's something that would be taken for granted in all the organizations that exist in my riding.

2210

I'd like to speak for a moment about the attempt in this motion to recognize the rights of independent members, and I note on page 28 of the motion that there is a substantial attempt to permit independent members to sit on committees. I think that is something that is probably long overdue and I wonder from time to time how the member for Elgin deals with the frustrations of not being able to sit on committee and have influence over legislation or issues of the day that come before committees. I think that's long overdue and I can't imagine any members thinking that their constituents would oppose that kind of suggestion.

I'd also like to speak in support of the proposed changes to standing orders 24 and 25. Those standing orders will deal with the length of time that members are permitted to speak, not only in the House but also in committee. I've unfortunately been able to sit in on committees when it has been quite apparent that members are speaking for a lengthy period of time only in an attempt to prevent other members from speaking in committee.

The most recent example of this that I can think of is when the member for Windsor-Sandwich spoke at length on the issue of referendums in the Legislative Assembly committee, but I know other members have done that. Some people regard it as an art. It does take a lot of concentration, but I think it's inevitable that unless the Chair or the other members are vigilant, there's a tendency to either repeat the same few points or speak way off topic.

The same I think applies to the suggestion that in the House there will be a reduction in the usual 90-minute opening speech. Invariably, from the speeches that I've listened to, the speakers in a 90-minute speech are off topic. They tend to drone on with their own party's propaganda.

Now, there are some speakers who have the rare skill to rise and actually provide enlightening commentary on the pros and cons of a legislative change. They are able to stay on topic and they avoid constant repetition. But I think I can say honestly that in the time that I've been here I've never heard a 90-minute speech in which that happened. Of those 90-minute speeches that I've heard, several opposition members seem to enjoy speaking in excess of 20 minutes but even the member for Renfrew North, who is a man of rare oratorical skills, usually lapses into pedantic history lessons, which are entertaining but are not in my opinion as lively or relevant as they might be.

We have a list of quotes from opposition members — I'm not going to use it this evening because it has already been referred to at length — in which we have quotes from members of both opposition parties when they were in the governing party, making statements such as, "If you speak on a topic for 20 minutes, you've pretty well said all that's going to be said on that topic." I think that is quite an obvious point and one that most people back home would agree with me on. If you have 20 minutes to speak, you pretty well can make your point on any legislative issue, and I think the rules that we've set out here recognize that. Those really are the points that I wish to make on the proposed motion.

Mr Crozier: It's a pleasure for me this evening to be able to add to this debate on the government's motion with regard to the standing orders. I wanted to start off, so that I could put my comments in some context, by quoting again from something that was said by the current Minister of Finance, Mr Ernie Eves, speaking on proposed NDP rule changes on June 22, 1992. He said:

"I think one has to understand that the only way opposition — not just opposition members but any public opposition to any proposed piece of legislation — can be effectively dealt with or talked about under our system of government, under the parliamentary system of government, is through the opposition parties' ability to debate and yes, on occasion, even stall or slow down progress of a particular bill, and that has worked very effectively over the years against governments of all political stripes."

I think that's an admission that there are times when it is necessary for debate to be slowed so that further consideration can be given to it. If we think, as some government members have suggested to us, that they're being gratuitous by these proposed rule changes, I think perhaps the sky in their world is a different colour than the one in the real world, because I too believe that many of these proposed changes to the standing orders are really intended to limit debate, by the opposition in particular.

I want to give you a couple of examples why I really don't believe the government is being as gratuitous as they might lead us to believe. I think back to the 1996

budget, I think it was, the introduction of that budget. As with normal procedure on budget day, many of us were locked up. Many of the government members perhaps were locked up as well, but certainly the opposition was locked in rooms and we couldn't leave those rooms until the budget was being presented.

A certain bill was presented that day prior to the budget presentation when all of us were locked in a room. That then gave me the impression that there was something this government wanted to do that certainly didn't give me as a member of this Legislature my rightful opportunity to be here when the bill was being presented.

Reference has been made to the introduction of Bill 26, and I will agree with government members who said, as far as the number of hours of committee hearings that were going to be given are concerned, we ended up having less. But the important thing at that time was that the government only wanted Bill 26, the omnibus bill, debated or at least in committee in the city of Toronto. As you know, Mr Speaker, there are many of us who live far from the city of Toronto and the opportunity that we felt had to be given to our constituents was the opportunity to attend committee meetings and speak on that particular bill. Again, it gives me the impression that the government was trying to limit the debate on it, to keep it in a smaller area to have fewer people who would be able to voice their opinion.

Then I come to Bill 103, the megacity bill. Frankly, I think this was an example of the mismanagement of this government. I can recall when we were debating Bill 103 in committee of the whole House that government members throughout that long debate would come to me and say, "Don't you agree that reading all these similar amendments is a waste of time?" And I said, "Well, if it is a waste of time, you should go to your government, to your House leader, to your whip, and say that what they've done is mismanaged this."

They didn't have amendments ready for their own bill. The only way they could be introduced was in committee of the whole, so they had to allow the bill to go to committee of the whole. That then opened the door and we were in fact able to slow that bill down because it was in committee of the whole. If they had managed their legislative agenda, they would have had that bill prepared so that it wouldn't have had to go to that particular committee.

2220

I want to tell you a bit about what my expectations were when I came here and why I have concerns about some of the changes that are being proposed to the standing orders.

I, like many of the backbenchers who have spoken on this bill, felt I should be given every opportunity to speak on every bill which was of particular interest to my constituents. As well, in committee I felt I should be able to represent my constituents on any matter that appeared before any committee and should be able to speak to that.

What has happened is that not every member, myself included, wants to speak on every bill. Not every bill presented before this Legislature has a direct effect on the constituents of Essex South. Not every member wants to

speaking on every bill, so that eliminates a great many at the outset. When we're in committee, not every issue that comes before a committee directly affects the constituents of Essex South, or maybe it isn't an issue that we need comment on beyond the regular members of that committee. Because not all of us want to speak on everything and not all of us want to speak to every bill, there is an opportunity over a period of time for all of us to have the opportunity to speak on issues that affect our constituents directly.

There are some bills, of course, that affect all the citizens of the province for which we may have a critic's interest, and therefore I would speak in my critic's role. But all I have to do is go to the whip, say I want to be put on the speaking list and hope the government doesn't invoke time allocation or closure before I get that opportunity.

When some government members complain they haven't had an opportunity to speak on a bill, chances are it's because of a decision that has been made by their House leader or by the government whip that they haven't been given that opportunity.

For example, notwithstanding the changes being suggested to the standing orders as they now are, closure can still be invoked. Closure is covered by article 47 of our standing orders:

"A motion for closure, which may be moved without notice, until it is decided shall preclude all amendment of the main question, and shall be in the following words: 'That this question be now put.' Unless it appears to the Speaker that such motion is an abuse of the standing orders of the House or an infringement of the rights of the minority, the question shall be put forthwith and decided without amendment or debate. If a motion for closure is resolved in the affirmative, the original question shall be put forthwith and decided without amendment or debate."

So notwithstanding these proposed rule changes that are supposed to give members greater opportunity to debate, the government can still bring in closure and, in so doing, limit the debate of their own members.

Another part of the standing orders that will still be in existence and that the government has used from time to time and that affects their own backbenchers' ability to speak is time allocation. That's covered by section 46 of the standing orders:

"The government House leader or any minister of the crown may move a motion with notice providing for the allocation of time to any proceeding on a government bill or a substantive government motion.

"At the end of the sessional day during which debate on the time allocation motion commences as the first government order of the day, the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bells shall be limited to 15 minutes."

Standing order 46 goes on to say:

"A time allocation motion may not be moved until at least three sessional days of debate have taken place on second reading consideration of any government bill or a substantive government motion when that government

bill or substantive motion has been called as the first government order of the day on each of the days."

What can really happen with this motion we're dealing with now is that when the government so chooses, notwithstanding the fact that maybe every government member wants to have a say in these changes, if the government House leader so chooses, they can ask that the question be called. The Speaker then would have to determine whether an adequate amount of debate has been given and, if that's the decision of the Speaker, debate would end.

We can make these changes, we can change the length of time we can speak, which may make us feel as though more opportunity will be given to speak, but in the final analysis it's the government House leader who usually decides that and, in so doing, very often limits the debate of his own members.

That's why our concern with some of these changes is that it might not result in giving government backbenchers more opportunity to speak; in fact, it may very well give them less opportunity to speak.

The discussion today has covered a number of issues in these changes to the standing orders, not the least of which are sitting extra hours. When I came to this Legislature, I didn't expect that the only work we do would be in this Legislature. Oftentimes when there's debate going on in the House, both government and opposition members are not necessarily in their seats. We may be back in our offices working; we can follow the debate on television. You don't have to be in this Legislature to be carrying on the work of your constituency. In fact, in some cases we might even be back in our constituency offices or in our constituency area. We have nothing against the House sitting extra hours, but as I've said, these changes are really more about the government designing this to expedite the legislative process than it is to give more opportunity to debate.

The government wants to reduce speaking times and limit access to inspection through order paper questions. I'll cover that in a little more detail in a few moments.

Speaker, you'll be more aware than I, because you have more experience than I — some members of this House who have served upwards of 20 years will have a better idea of what these changes really mean and how, over a period of time, opposition members have been stifled by changes in the standing orders. That's why I have a little difficulty believing that these changes to the standing orders are simply being suggested by one member who has a limited amount of experience in this House. In fact, I think he said earlier today that these changes weren't all necessarily his idea, that many of them came from previous reviews of the standing orders.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s the Davis government created a standing committee on procedural affairs which produced a number of reports, and only one of the reports was ever debated in the Legislature. Apparently, the committee was ineffective in bringing significant changes to the standing orders.

During the mid-1980s, 1985 through 1990, there were major changes implemented. Opposition days, for example, were brought into the standing orders. There were standard time limits on bills, secret ballots for election of

the Speaker, increased responsibilities for committees, among other measures introduced by the government House leader of the day, Mr Conway. Like this debate, the debate over those changes was acrimonious at times, but in the end, it was the House leaders who came together and made the final negotiations successful, resulting in some changes to the standing orders.

Some of the proposed rule changes coming from this particular motion, and there are some 44 changes being proposed — just a few I'd like to cover individually. I'd like to try and explain to those who may be watching my interpretation of what those changes mean and how I think it's going to affect me and my effectiveness in representing my constituents.

2230

There's the one we're labelling the two-for-one special, that the House may sit from 6:30 to 9:30, through a motion, with no debate and a 15-minute bell. It would count as a sessional day, with no corresponding question period. This proposal is one of the ones that concerns me most — not that we would sit from 6:30 till 9:30, because many of us from out of town are here all the time anyway and we don't have constituency meetings to attend in the evenings, so oftentimes it would give us something to do. But the point in this change is (1) that it's done with no debate and therefore not in as democratic a way as we might like, but (2) a sessional day is counted without the opportunity for the opposition to have a question period.

Question period is an important part of our day. If we were going to count an extra sessional day, it would be reasonable to assume that we would have an extra question period as well.

Another change is to eliminate the need for a House calendar motion by getting rid of standing order 10(a). This means the government does not need the permission of the Speaker to sit when the parliamentary calendar does not have the House scheduled to sit. The government, with this proposal, can unilaterally bring the House back when it pleases and in effect it makes the parliamentary calendar obsolete.

Normally we sit for two 13-week sessions a year, give or take a week. We have a week off in the middle for constituency week. We start the third week in September and we go through till near Christmas, and we start again in the second or third week in March and we go through to the end of June. That's when the normal parliamentary calendar exists.

Why has it been set up that way? Why has there been some regularity put into it? It gives us an opportunity between sessions to have committee meetings for the committees to go out around the province. If the government could simply call us back whenever they liked, I'm not sure how we'd schedule committee meetings over any specific period of time. It allows us to get back into our constituencies, to work in our constituency offices, to get out around the constituency, to find out what our constituents' concerns are. That's why the parliamentary calendar was set up with some regularity to it, so we could plan our year.

It would appear to me that if this government wants the opportunity to call Parliament back any time it wants,

without any parliamentary schedule, it's another tinge of mismanagement, because they don't really know what's going on and when they want it to go on. I think there should be some regularity to it. I think there should be a parliamentary calendar and I think it should be adhered to. Certainly if there's an emergency, any kind of emergency, that would be good reason to call the Parliament back outside of the parliamentary calendar.

Another rule change the government is suggesting is that losing a quorum call during private members' business on Thursday morning still allows the House to reconvene at 1:30. I'd like to explain to those who may be watching and who are concerned about the operation of Parliament what that really means. It's the government's responsibility to maintain a quorum. Sometimes they find it a little aggravating that we call quorum, but after all, it's the government's responsibility to do that. What they're saying here is: "We don't want to really have to have 20 members in to watch the private members' business. We'd like the opportunity to just go on about other business and not pay an awful lot of attention to it."

As you know, Speaker, and as some watching at home may know, there isn't always a quorum. In fact, we don't always make quorum calls. It depends on the business before the House. It depends on whether a member feels it's an issue of importance, that we should have more than 20 members in the House. It doesn't mean the House can't operate with less than 20; it's just that when a quorum is called, the government is responsible for making that quorum up. It's a responsibility that it seems the government doesn't want to have.

Speaking times are reduced from 90 to 40 minutes for leadoff and the standard 30-minute speeches are reduced to 20 minutes. To some extent I might agree that there are occasions when there are 90-minute speeches made when what has to be said could be said in less time, but I think that should be up to the individual. I think of our member for Fort William; I can remember a speech very recently that Lyn McLeod gave on education, the leadoff speech. It was a 90-minute speech that I felt compelled to send out to a number of educators. It was an important bill, an encompassing bill, and it took 90 minutes, and maybe it could have taken more, to set the tone for that bill. There are times when the 90 minutes aren't taken, and I think that should be the option of the person leading off that debate. Sometimes the time is split so that two or three speakers may use up the 90 minutes. Limiting that amount of time, I'm afraid, limits the amount of time someone has to set the tone of the bill.

The standard 30-minute speeches are reduced to 20 minutes. That might not be all bad; that would have meant that I would have been finished three minutes ago, and maybe that would be good in this particular instance. But again it's up to the member to decide whether they need that 30 minutes or not, and if they don't, they simply have their say and sit down.

After five hours of debate, the speaking times are 10 minutes. That's getting pretty restrictive. It's difficult to develop the context of a speech in 10 minutes in this Legislature. We are very opposed to this time restriction. I believe it should be left up to the judgement of the

person giving the speech the length of time it should take.

Another change that has ramifications far and beyond what someone might normally consider is answering petitions from eight days to 45 days. We stand in this Legislature each day we're in session and read petitions from concerned constituents. I think the constituents should have an answer to their concern, regardless of what the petition is. They've taken the time to sign a petition to express to the government either a point of concern or a point of support. I think the government, with all its resources, should be able to answer a petition in eight days rather than 45 days.

The time restraint for the presentation of statutory reports is eliminated. What that means is that if the government decides simply not to make a statutory report, it can simply forget about it. That's certainly abdicating a responsibility of the government.

The government House leader "may" instead of "must" do a business statement for the up-and-coming week. Many of us plan our legislative calendar through the House schedule. As critic for consumer and commercial relations, for example, it's important for me to know what's on the House schedule so that I can be prepared to discuss that particular issue. In fact, all too often these days, rather than bills being on the calendar for the upcoming week, we get "To be announced." That could be one of two things. It can be either intended to keep the opposition off guard or it can mean that the government really doesn't have its act right and doesn't know what it's going to call from one day to the next. That, I hope, wouldn't give governments the opportunity to just simply mismanage their business.

Estimates may be reported to the House in 12 instead of five sessional days after the budget. The budget is one of the most important documents to come before this Legislature in any given year, but the estimates that are the nitty-gritty of those budgets are even more important. Great fanfare is made about the budget. Budget day is exciting and full of a lot of fanfare and announcements, but what's really important is what's in the estimates, and the quicker we can get to those estimates, the quicker the government can get those estimates out, the better it is in explaining to the people of Ontario what that budget really means.

2240

Government bills may be introduced during the last two weeks of a session with allowance to proceed for second reading. I see this as a bit of a bully move, a great bully move as a matter of fact, because what they can do is save important legislation until the last two weeks of the session, get it on the paper, get it into second reading; in other words, ram it through. What the current standing order is for is to say to governments that if you're handling things in what this government likes to term a businesslike way, then there's no reason in this world why you shouldn't have that kind of legislation ready to go before the last two weeks of the session and therefore not be accused of trying to simply ram the bill through.

Answering order paper questions: from 14 to 45 days. We don't all get an opportunity to ask questions in the

Legislature of any given minister. What questions on the order paper allow us to do is to put the question to the ministry, ask for information, ask for an answer. It gives the ministry an opportunity to take some time to answer, and in many instances I think we get a better, more complete answer. Taking it from 14 to 45 days: With the resources that the government has, that a minister has in his or her office, or that the ministry in total has, they should be able to answer in the 14 days that are given.

"No member shall have more than four questions on the order paper." I don't know why they picked four. I don't have any questions on the order paper right now, but on the other hand as things develop in my constituency I might want to have 10 questions on the order paper. What's the difference? The point is we have questions that need to be answered from time to time and the order paper is one of those ways in which we can ask them.

I caution the government to look at these changes in the standing orders very carefully and to keep in mind that the opposition is here to represent the minority and that anything that's done to take away the rights of the minority, our rights to ask questions on their behalf, really, as my colleague from Kingston and The Islands said earlier, goes to the heart of the kind of government we have. I think we all want an open, accessible and accountable government, and I'm not so sure these standing order changes will allow that.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I certainly agree with the previous speaker that what we have here is a challenge to democratic process as we have known it in this province. It is a very serious matter when we find a government bullying through, as they are in the last few days, a motion like this that changes very directly the kind of government we have. What this motion really means is that Ontario will suffer a tyranny of the majority, and it's extremely important for us to understand what that means in terms of democracy as we have known it.

In our province since the beginning of this place, it has been extremely important for there to be a protected and clear voice for those who do not support the goals of a particular government. In a democracy we expect there to be differences of political opinion. We have a democracy because we know we are not all alike and we do not all have the same political philosophy. We do not all share the same view of how to solve the problems of our society. We do not all have the same public policy philosophy.

If in fact we have no disagreement, there's really no point in having a democracy. If in fact what we want is a chamber that only allows the majority to express its opinion and to have sway over all others who might oppose them, then it's not a democracy any more. I would suggest that what we have before us in this motion is more than the thin edge of the wedge; it is indeed the wedge that is being put there into the democratic process, prying away the ability of those who are in opposition to the government, particularly to a majority government, to express the views and concerns of those who are not members of that government.

One of the things that is most offensive is that this is just the last in a long row of affronts to democracy by this government. Again and again we hear in this place, as we did earlier today from the member for Peterborough, comments about how what we do in this place is a waste of time, that nobody ever says anything important.

I think it is extremely serious when members of a government do not believe in the democratic process. It is easy for them to undermine the democratic process when they themselves don't believe in it. Much of this debate has centred around the view that this government has of the whole issue of democracy. It sends a chill down my spine because it really portends very ill for us.

What have we seen from the beginning of this government? We've seen contempt for the governmental process. We've seen contempt for this Legislature. We have seen effort after effort to bull things through this place without the knowledge and without the ability of the public to scrutinize what we do and to have an opportunity to comment. That has happened again and again. That has been represented in this place as the way in which government efficiently does its business.

Government is about more than efficiency. Government is about ensuring that what we do is to come up with solutions to the problems faced by our economy, by our social structure, by our justice system, by all the elements that go to build us as a community, and come up with solutions in a way that is going to be positive, not in a way that ignores the views of those who disagree. The measure of a democratic government is the respect and consideration it gives to views that are not its own.

There is a great claim — we've heard it a number of times in the last few days — that this government has consulted more than any other government. Well, that simply is not the case. It will not stand up to any scrutiny. It is simply not the case, but it's not surprising that this government again and again makes statements that are somewhat short of accuracy in many ways, and I'll give you an example.

The member for Nepean in his very melodramatic presentation earlier today about these rules kept saying — he must have said it at least five, possibly even 10 times — that the whole reason he wanted this thing to happen was because we had spent two days in December last year talking about whether we would work for an extra week.

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Let me read to you the motion we talked about for two days:

"Notwithstanding standing order 6(a) the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 16, 1996, until Thursday, December 19, 1996, and that when the House adjourns on Thursday, December 19, 1996, it stand adjourned until Monday, January 13, 1997, which date commences the spring sessional period."

In other words, we did not spend two days talking about an extra week of a session at all. We've spent two days talking about a bill that threw out the legislative calendar, that set in place a precedent in terms of moving into a spring session without having a period of time for committee work, with the intention expressed by the House leader that there would be a very limited number

of items debated in the period in which we came back, all of which we had no notion of because the bills had not been ready. The government was so incompetent that it knew it needed a session, a special, extraordinary session, but it still didn't have the bills ready. It didn't have the information ready that would allow people to scrutinize the legislation that was supposed to come forward in some of those cases.

What we see is the ploy of starting a spring session on January 13 so that the government, when it got its act together, could introduce legislation and flout the rules of this House. That's exactly what this was all about.

When the member for Nepean claims that the whole reason, and tries to make this great presentation to the people of Ontario that the opposition was so lazy that it worked for two days to try and prevent itself from working for an extra week — that's not at all what the opposition was about, and that is a misrepresentation of the facts, which are here in Hansard.

Both House leaders, as I understand it, have made it quite clear that everyone was willing to meet that extra week. That was not the issue. The issue was the government's attempt to go around the rules of this House, get its own way when it didn't have its act together and it wasn't ready to do what it needed to do in the regular session — another example of incompetence on the part of this government, and there have been many.

It is quite frustrating for us on this side to recognize that the members of the government party themselves have no respect for this place, and no respect for the importance of public discussion of the issues that face us day to day in this province. They prefer very much to simply go their own way. They do not want things brought to the light of day. They do not want the public to know what is happening.

My colleague from Essex South went through item after item in this motion that shows that the government does not want to shed any light on what it's doing. It does not want to answer questions, whether they come in the form of petitions, whether they come in the form of question period, whether they come in the form of letters or order paper questions. All of this they want to limit because they do not want people to have information about what they're doing until they have it in place, at which point there's no recourse either for us in the opposition or for the general public.

What we are seeing, what we are witnessing with this motion is a further erosion of the democratic rights of the citizens of this province, and I'm not overstating that. It is an extraordinarily serious matter when a government has sat down and tried to figure out how it can block the voices of opposition, how it can block the information flow to the citizens of this province, how it can limit discussion as much as possible so it can simply go ahead with its agenda.

When we hear member after member of the government say that the speeches that are given in this place are meaningless, to whom are they meaningless? They are meaningless to people in the government party who don't like to hear any opposition, who don't like to hear logical arguments against the positions they have taken, who do not want us to express those publicly so that the public

out there will begin to question the undemocratic way in which this government wants to function. It's simply the case.

We have seen it again and again. We have seen the numbers of times the House leader has stood in his place and moved that we move directly to orders of the day, leaving out the possibility of petitions, which are one of the very few ways that citizens are able to have their voice heard in this place, and we've seen that happen again and again.

Are we going to see more of it? Certainly we are, because this proposal to have the whole process turned on its head so those kinds of proceedings come before question period is simply an effort to try and prevent the opposition from raising questions of order, questions of privilege that exist from time to time.

This government sees any kind of opposition as delay. This government does not see opposition as an effort to make the legislative process work, and work more smoothly, in spite of the fact that again and again they have brought forward flawed bills which when they have gone to committee have resulted in many, many amendments to make the integrity of those bills an actual fact.

This government wants to truncate the process so that within a very short period of time it can continue its radical revolution, its revolution of the right, its efforts to block the possibility of real democracy within this province. It's a simple as that.

When we look at this proposal that at any given time, without notice, the government could bring forward a motion on any given day, that very day this place would sit for an extra session in the evening — without notice — they could bring that and their huge majority could force it through this place. They even want to limit discussion and they don't want any discussion on the motion and they want to limit the bell to a 15-minute bell.

People don't understand what the purpose of that is, and there are several purposes to it. First of all they get an extra sessional day without a question period. They get a whole extra day of work, which means they can push more and more legislation through without having to be accountable.

Question period is about accountability. It's about asking the ministers if they know what they're doing and whether they know the effect of what they're doing and how they propose to remedy some of the chaos they are causing. I'm not surprised that this government doesn't want question periods, that they want free legislative days without question periods, because the level of chaos they're creating is such that they know question periods are politically dangerous for them because they expose very clearly the kind of agenda this government has and the incompetence this government is displaying in terms of implementing its program.

The other purpose is to make sure that opposition members are tied to their desks at all times, because the government will know when it's going to call that motion. Government members can still go to events in their own constituencies, government members are going to be able to perform their political tasks outside of this place, but this will make it impossible for the opposition parties to carry out the tasks we have been elected to

carry out on behalf of our constituents. It will not be possible for us, either as critics within our field of criticism or as constituency representatives, to do our job when we are unable to leave this place because we never know when a bill of ours might be called.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): That's what it's all about.

Mrs Boyd: That's what it's all about, as the House leader for the opposition suggests. It's all about making sure the democratic process doesn't work by infringing on the privileges of opposition members. It is the tyranny of the majority over the minority, not only in this place, but since we represent large areas of this province, the tyranny of the majority over our constituents as well.

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What this really tells us is that this is a government that secretly knows that the kind of agenda that they are putting forward is not meeting with the approval of the population. This is a government that knows that every opportunity to expose the flimsiness of the kind of platform that this government has, to expose the fallacies in its ideological perspective, calls danger upon them and their re-election. They are moving now to make sure that the voices of opposition are silenced one way or another. They are doing everything they can to make sure that theirs are the only voices that get heard out there.

Again and again over the last two years, we have heard the contempt with which this government views the legislative process: their efforts to shorten debate, their efforts to make fun of questions, the kind of smug satisfaction that they express at every turn about their own policies and their own so-called successes. During the megacity debate, the constant ridiculing of the process by members of the opposition, even when those members were in the chair, as Chair of this House, was simply disgraceful. If they don't know that the people of Ontario did not appreciate the ridicule that they piled on the democratic process, I can tell you that the letters we all have received on this side of the House, the comments that we receive all the time, tell us that they are wrong.

Why should we worry? There may be those in the government who are saying: "If all of this is true, why are they so worried about these rule changes, because if they're right, then we won't win the next election and so we'll be hoist with our own petard." We're not quite as selfish as that. The opposition in this place really believes in the democratic process and we do not want to see rules that do not permit this kind of discussion.

Much has been made of the fact that in 1991 the then NDP House leader made a motion that had some similar elements to those that are in this motion, and much has been made by the member for Scarborough East about the fact that that means we would have done the same thing. That's nonsense. We had a majority, we could have done the same thing, we didn't. We listened to the objections of people like Ernie Eves, the member for Parry Sound. We listened very, very hard to the concerns that were coming forward. In fact, that has been the character of both the previous Liberal government and our government in terms of the changes that were made to the Legislature.

I want you to know, and you do, because you've heard some of the speeches on this topic, that we had rampant backbenchers who seemed to think that a change in the rules would enable them to have more authority and more say.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Peter Kormos, yes.

Mrs Boyd: We certainly did, and you've heard from them. But we as a government understood that you don't appease your backbenchers at the expense of democracy, and that's precisely what this cabinet has agreed to do.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Speaker, it's quite clear that there are citizens in Ontario who are just as passionate about democracy as the members of the opposition.

It is really, really important for us to be very, very clear about the ulterior motives here. This has nothing to do with efficiency; this has everything to do with silencing opposition. We've seen that happen again and again and again at the hands of this government. This government consistently wants to make sure that any kind of opposition is immediately ended. The way they have treated this place, the way they have treated the members in this place, is quite disgraceful.

I would say to you, Mr Speaker, that the passionate comment about listening is very real. How can you find anything important if you don't listen? It's very clear that these folks don't listen. They have their little private meetings, which they have at such a high level that most of us can't even hear ourselves think, much less talk, and they think nothing of that. It happens all the time, and you as Speaker know that you have to call them to order and ask them to take their meetings outside again and again, just as every Speaker does.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Marion, easy now.

Mrs Boyd: It is very, very important that you understand how you are appearing to the public, even now —

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Easy, Marion.

Mrs Boyd: — especially the Minister of Agriculture, who is being ridiculous in terms of his efforts to try and put down a member of the opposition who is speaking about a very —

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Len Wood: Throw the Minister of Agriculture out.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cochrane North. The member for London Centre.

Mrs Boyd: It's very typical of the members of this government that when someone disagrees with them, their response is ridicule, and that is exactly how you behave. You behave that way to your constituents, you behave that way to other members here, you behave that way in the public media, and you think people don't notice this? I've got to tell you, your lack of respect for the electorate in this province is becoming evident to even the most apolitical person — very, very much so.

Mr Gilchrist: Why don't you talk about the social contract? Talk about respecting the unions. Talk about respecting —

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Scarborough East.

Mrs Boyd: The only rebuttal that this government has is to try and paint other governments with the same brush

and they're not succeeding. That's why they're so frustrated, that's why they want to move their agenda ahead even faster, even though they've shown again and again that they have no capacity to implement what they've already passed.

We've had a dreadful, dreadful session, and question after question about the family support plan and the lack of ability of the Ministry of the Attorney General to implement a plan that was touted by this government to be very efficient and very helpful. We have admissions, daily, by ministry people that they cannot possibly carry out their mandate with the kind of staff they have, given the cutbacks that have happened. We see forest fires raging in northern Ontario and 2,000 people who used to work maintaining the safety of our natural resources thrown out of work.

Do you think that all of the people can be fooled all the time? Do you really think so? One of your own members the other day, the member for Carleton, said, "You can't fool all the people all the time unless you have a majority government." It was a joke, wasn't it? Only it isn't a joke, because it's exactly the way you're governing. "We can do whatever we like because in the two years before the last election, we went around and talked to our cronies around the province and consulted with them so that we would hear what we wanted to hear, and so we don't need to consult any more. We don't need to listen any more. We were elected, we've got a majority, we can do what we want to do."

I suggest that the member for Peterborough, who earlier today said nothing we do in here has any importance, is exactly the element that is destroying a democratic process. What's the difference between that and governments in Europe that simply suspended their Legislature? Not much. Is that going to be the next step? You get through what you want and then what do you do? Suspend the calendar and never call us back again until you're ready for an election? Is that what you want to do?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: You did that. You're a farce, Marion. I used to respect you, but I don't any more.

Mrs Boyd: The feeling is mutual.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

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Mr Len Wood: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture should apologize for the last words he said.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't hear what he said. Have you said anything wrong?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: I said the former Minister of Justice was a farce and she told me the feeling was mutual. I am sorry. I apologize for saying that.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not out of order, as far as I am concerned. It's not conducive to good conversation, good debate. At the same time — the member for London Centre?

Mrs Boyd: Mr Speaker, just so you're clear on this, what I said, "The feeling is mutual," about to the Minister of Agriculture was that he said, "I used to respect you," and I said, "The feeling was mutual."

This outburst is exactly what I'm talking about. We did meet in the fall of 1994, as you are well aware. An election was called in April, so there was a period of time when this Legislature did not meet. What you are talking about is going through a form of democracy that is a joke, because what you are trying to do with your rules is make sure this place has little relevance at all to what you want to do.

You envision a system of government where you decide behind closed doors what you want to do. You bring it in here. You frogmarch it through this place in such quick order that the public doesn't even know what's happening and there's no chance for them to raise any kind of question about what you're doing; and then you go through a series of efforts to try to ensure that the public consultation process is as quick as possible so that people don't have a chance to prepare and gather their facts and prepare their responses, and keep it as short as possible and in as few places as possible. You know that is exactly what these rules are designed to do.

They were even presented in a duplicitous manner, with the member for Nepean suggesting these were all his own idea in the morning at a press conference and the minister announcing he was going to bring these in in the afternoon. Even the manner of bringing these forward was simply an effort to try to pretend this is something it is not. You can't fool all the people all the time, and you're being found out. What is betraying you is your own undemocratic actions.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am pleased to speak on the proposed standing order changes. There are a number of areas in these changes that I believe will improve the business of government, and isn't that why we're all here? At least I thought that's why we're here. Isn't that what the people of this province elected us to do, to run this government in a businesslike fashion and not the display we just saw two or three minutes ago?

We have heard words bandied around over the last couple of days, words like "respect," "bullies," "parasites," "lack of democracy," "trickery" etc. I suggest that those words used by the opposition are rhetoric only, words that show their lack of comprehension of this proposal. The opposition talks of reduced democracy. I suggest that these changes protect the democratic rights of its members.

I've listened for two years to the so-called debate in this House, when people ramble on for 90 minutes talking about the same thing over and over and over again, usually the same stock speech with a few new lines every now and again put in. That is not debate. You know it and I know it. That is called grandstanding, by the same people talking about the same issues. There is no interaction whatsoever in this House. That's what debate is all about. Why should they have a monopoly on debate, these ones who stand up for 90 minutes?

I'm an elected member of this House. My constituents are equally as important to me as anybody. Then why is it not my right to speak or to have the opportunity to do so? Under the proposed changes I will have the right and the time to debate on behalf of the people of my riding. That's why I'm here and that should be my right, to also be listened to.

Private members' bills are extremely important. They reflect the concerns, the suggestions and the wishes of the people of this province. You talk about wanting people to have more say and more consultation, yet you restrict the time allocated to debate on these very important bills. We are limiting the rights of members to have a fair and equal time on these bills, bills that reflect the ideas and the concerns of the people of this province.

I constantly hear the oldtimers say, "For those of us in the know." I heard it this afternoon from the member for Algoma: "For those of us in the know." Yes, you have been around longer compared to the rest of us, but maybe, just maybe, these new ideas are long overdue. I know the word "change" is very unfamiliar to you folks over here, but only if we have new ideas, new rules and new people can we prepare this province for the next century.

This government is the first government in many years that made promises and has kept those promises. The people of this province want a change and elected us to carry —

Interjections.

Mr Micalash: Mike Harris said he had no plan to close hospitals: 37 hospitals closing. Also, registration fees in northern Ontario. He should resign. He said he would resign if he didn't keep his promises.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, members. Member for Kenora —

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): We're being provoked, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Just cool down.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, it's the last time I warn you.

Mr Stewart: As I said, I always enjoy it when members like the member for Kenora make these comments, because what it says is that we've struck a nerve that is factual, that they can't cope with. That's the nice part about this. Maybe this is debate at its best.

Mr Micalash: You said no new user fees. Vehicle registration in northern Ontario is not a user fee? Give me a break.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Kenora, it's also the last time I warn you. That's enough.

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Mr Stewart: I guess this is one of the best reasons we should be changing some of the standing orders, when you see the type of display that is going on now, especially from the member for Kenora and others. For grown human beings to conduct themselves in this fashion, I am disgusted, and I think the constituents in your riding would be as disgusted as I am.

This government, as I said, is the first government in many years that made promises and indeed has kept those promises. The people of the province want changes and they elected us to carry out those changes.

We have heard today that we do not listen to people, that we do not consult with people. That is wrong, dead wrong, and it's wrong on behalf of our critics. The opposition constantly refers to us pushing things through the House and that under these new changes we will bypass the wishes of the people.

I remember the two previous governments' interpretation of listening to people. First of all, during the last government the House rarely sat. They spent as little time as possible listening to the people. Listening was not in their vocabulary. Input was not being considered. Their policy was not to call the House to order but rather to put through things by regulation. I believe in the last year they put through 940-some regulations that the public had absolutely no input into whatsoever.

This leads to the issue before us. The people voted for change, voted for reform, voted for productivity and, finally, voted to get on with it as soon as possible. The difference between what we are doing and what the opposition parties did is that we understand what the people wanted because they told us. We consulted with them four years before we were elected, and they asked us to get on with it and put it in place just as soon as we were elected. They wanted it done quicker, they wanted it done more effectively and indeed they wanted it done more efficiently.

Another area I would like to address is the proposed changes that would allow a member to abstain from voting. This is allowed in other provinces and at other levels of government. Why not in this House? There are many occasions when a member may believe that the interests of their constituents could be better served if they voted in abstention. I believe this is a member's democratic right, whereas some just don't come into the House. I hear the opposition members talk about democratic rights. I suggest the opposition members should jump at the chance to support this type of clause.

The final change I want to address is increasing the amount of productivity and efficiency through longer hours. We have to make it easier to extend the House when necessary. I appreciate that some members have a different work ethic. If any of the public witnessed the conduct in this House today and this so-called debate, that suggests our work ethic is very limited and the public is being very shortchanged.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Stewart: I guess it proves what I've been talking about. For those of you who have not been in business —

Mr Bradley: Why does it prove what you have been talking about? Break away from the notes that Mike has provided for you.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Stewart: For those of you who have not been in business, and certainly many of you haven't, or in administration as owners or managers, or dedicated workers, I can appreciate that many of you may balk at the extra hours. Let me assure you that extra hours are necessary if we want to increase productivity. Some of you would not know that term, but it happens to be out in the real world. Surely some of the opposition must understand that. When there is work to be done, I suggest we do it. Industry does it, retail does it, labour does it. We do it in our everyday lives. Why not in this House? Let's get the business of government into reality and prepare for the future. The future for this Legislature is this type of changes to the standing orders.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Fort William): The behaviour of this government continues to remind me of the bully in the school yard. They just keep wanting to hit harder and harder and harder in the hope that maybe the victim, if they're beaten up enough, will finally give in and go away, and then the bully will have its own way and be able to do whatever it wants to do without being checked in any way.

In that kind of context, it seems to me that perhaps the member for Nepean resembles no one so much as that junior in the school yard who is so eager to be accepted that he's prepared to do whatever the big boys say has to be done. So we have these so-called rule changes supposed to be in the interests of democracy when every one of us knows that the purpose of these rule changes is to limit criticism, to limit debate and to attack the democratic process in this Legislative Assembly.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, I warned you already.

Mrs McLeod: This government once again, as it has been from the very beginning, is concerned only with getting its own way, getting its own way unchecked, ramming through its agenda. They really don't care what happens to democracy in the process.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton East, I ask you to leave. I name you.

Mr Agostino was escorted from the chamber.

Mrs McLeod: The way in which the rule changes have been introduced is typical of the kind of bullying tactics which we have seen from this government.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean, this is the last time I warn you too.

Mr Len Wood: Throw him out.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Cochrane North.

Mrs McLeod: As my House leader has reminded us in his contribution to this debate, this government brought in these rule changes at the very last possible moment in this session, late on a Thursday, and then called them for debate on the next sessional day, clearly in the hopes that they could force the rule changes through with very little opposition and with nobody taking very much notice.

It certainly takes us back to the original bully bill, Bill 26, which I know a number of my colleagues have already talked about, but I go back to that because that showed us the true face of this government and the way they intended to govern.

People will remember that was the bill that paved the way for the hospital restructuring commission to be put in place, and all of us have seen the dictatorial way in which that commission is marching into our communities and shutting down our hospitals, regardless of any of the expressed concerns of any of the residents of those communities.

That was the bully bill that prepared the way for the municipal amalgamation that said that this government could force communities to amalgamate, no matter how many residents of the community said, "This is not what we want." On the megacity bill, they rammed that

through in spite of the opposition of 74% of the people who wanted to express their concerns.

This was the bill that set the stage for the user fees, that set the stage for the government, with legislative sanction, to be able to bring in the copayments for seniors on their drugs.

All of this was wrapped into one bill that the government introduced when we were in the middle of a lockup on the budget. The government not only didn't want us to notice that they brought in the bill, they didn't want us to see what was in this omnibus, giant bill that covers so many areas at once. They wanted it passed without debate. They wanted it passed without public hearings. They wanted it passed before Christmas, in two weeks' time. That set the stage for the kind of bullying tactics we have continued to see from a government that rammed that bill through and has been beating up people in communities across this province ever since.

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Now these rule changes are going to make it just that much easier for the government to push things through even faster. I guess all of us wonder why this government has to be in such a hurry.

I think most people would feel that there's a measure of political opportunism in this, that the government has some very nasty things to do, that they have some dirty work to do they know is not going to be well received, whether it is the copayments for seniors' drugs, the user fees they said they'd never introduce, or the closure of our hospitals which Mike Harris said he had no intention of doing, or the ramming through of municipal amalgamations which Mike Harris himself said would actually cost more and which he would never do.

They have a lot of dirty work they have to do, so they want to get it done fast so they can spend the next year and a half or two years appeasing people, patting people on the head a little bit, trying to reassure them that they really are a kinder, gentler government, not really a bully government at all. They want people to forget the anger and the frustration people are feeling right now at the sheer string of broken promises that have come from this government.

It won't work. It won't work because what this government is doing now is being done so fast and so badly that they are creating nothing but chaos and the chaos will not go away in the next two years. People will not forget that it was this government in such a hurry that created the chaos they're living with in their communities.

We are going to see, just as an example, chaos in collective bargaining. Bill 136, which the government introduced just two weeks ago, is a bill that's like a War Measures Act in what it imposes on public sector employees who are already losing their jobs at a rate never before seen, a bill giving employers the unilateral right to suspend the right to strike in a collective bargaining situation. This is a War Measures Act imposed to solve a war created by a government that was bringing about municipal amalgamations and school board amalgamations and closing hospitals and creating the kind of chaos that took a War Measures Act to control.

We are going to see chaos in hospitals across this province, because there have been millions of dollars

taken out of our hospital budgets. Those cuts are forcing hospitals to close and there is no plan for reinvestment of those dollars, no matter how many days in a row the Minister of Health talks about reinvestment.

All we have from the Minister of Health are political announcements, such as the dollars that would go into cardiac care, which he talked about today, without any recognition that those kinds of political announcements, designed to tell people, "Yes, we're reinvesting money in health care," don't make up for the fact that the dollars taken out of our hospitals come out of the core services, and you cannot provide specialized health services when you can't have core services like hospital beds or a hospital in your local community. So there will be chaos that will continue on for the next two years in health care and in hospital services.

There will certainly be chaos in education. This government is forcing through changes in governance with school board amalgamations, changes in collective bargaining that's bringing chaos. It's forcing through changes in curriculum.

The member for Simcoe Centre talked about people being resistant to change, that it's an uncomfortable thing. I'm resistant to change which is not thought out, which brings about sheer chaos. I'm resistant to changes in curriculum that are brought in at the end of June to be in place for September when not only is there no training for teachers but there are no curriculum materials available for the teachers. This kind of change that is being forced through is change all right, but it is much too much and much too fast. It is sheer destruction that is being brought in, not constructive change, and it will leave us with chaos and people will not forget the legacy of a government in too much of a hurry.

I suggest to the government that rule changes that let them go even faster, that let them go without any checks or balances from the opposition or from critics are not going to serve their political purposes well at the end of the day. Nevertheless, I know this is a government that is going to continue on, that is going to continue to want to push through these rule changes, to ram them through, and one of their goals clearly is to shut down any opposition concerns, any criticisms.

My colleague from Scarborough North earlier tonight talked about the way in which this government has limited concerns being expressed, even demonstrations of the most innocent kind on the part of concerned citizens. He was reminding us of the day the dogs were brought in because of the fear of what was going to occur outside this building if concerned citizens came to express their concerns. I remember during the megacity debates when our galleries were empty even though there were lineups of people outside wanting to get in and hear the debate, but the scrutiny was so intense, they were so worried about having the public hear our debates, that we couldn't fill the galleries with the people who had come to hear them.

I wonder why this government just is so resistant to criticism. Why is it that they don't feel they can withstand any kind of opposition? Why do they have such a need to muzzle not only the opposition in the Legislature but the critics among those who are affected by their

policies, those whom they dismiss as being interest groups? In the education hearings even parents who were critical of the government were dismissed as being an interest group.

I suppose some might suggest that there's an arrogance there, that this is a government that doesn't feel it needs to listen. They have a majority. They say they have a mandate to bring in these changes, and so they say they don't really need to listen when they're given that kind of a mandate. I suppose that may be the reason they feel it's okay to muzzle any opposition.

I wonder sometimes if there's a degree of cowardice in this, because any of us who have been in politics for a long time know it is a whole lot tougher to make those tough decisions about public policy when you know what the criticisms are, when you've really heard all the different perspectives, when you've weighed the concerns that are there. It's so much easier just to pull up the drawbridge and adopt a siege mentality, protect yourself from any criticism and just get on and do what you want to do. That is not strong leadership and that is not making tough decisions. That is taking the easiest way out and getting on with what you have decided you're going to do.

I sometimes wonder if the reason this government wants to muzzle opposition, doesn't want to hear criticism, is because they don't really believe their agenda can stand up to scrutiny. If we look at a government that made cuts for the sake of making cuts because they had to deliver one fundamental commitment, and that was the promise of a tax cut, they know full well what they're doing out there cannot stand up to public scrutiny.

Even some of their contracting-out measures we can prove ended up costing more than they saved, so it's not surprising the government doesn't want to hear the reality of what they're doing, so maybe they don't think their agenda can stand up to scrutiny.

Maybe the real reason they want to muzzle opposition is because they're afraid their own backbenchers might actually hear the criticism. Maybe they're afraid that if the backbenchers hear the debate, that if the debate goes on for any length of time, maybe the backbenchers will bring some opposition within the government itself.

Maybe there will be others with the kinds of concerns and the kind of courage to stand on principle that we saw from Mr Skarica, or from Mr Carr, or from Mr Murdoch, who were prepared to say: "We hear the criticisms, the concerns that come from our constituents. We want to raise those with government. We think that's a legitimate part of the democratic process and an important part of our role as representatives of our constituents. So let us speak freely to those concerns, and if hearing those the government decides to continue with what it's doing, so be it, but at least let the debate take place so that all perspectives can be heard."

I suspect that when it comes right down to it, none of these reasons fully explains why this government wants to take these steps to muzzle opposition. I suspect the real reason is that it is those Young Turks in the back room who really want to protect their ability to just ram things through with no disturbance whatsoever.

Those are the ones who were described publicly by a member of the government caucus as sitting in the back rooms with a copy of the Common Sense Revolution in one hand and Machiavelli's *The Prince* in the other and not much in between. They want to be able to get on with their anointed role without having the inconvenience of a messy debate and criticism being raised in the Legislature. They're the real bullies and there is no question that they are running the show.

This government's rule changes, which I'm concerned they are just going to ram through again, will leave the government itself — and I say to the government House leader that you've got to be worried about this — with no reasonable chance to review its own legislation, no reasonable chance to revisit it, to make amendments, to actually take that time to get it right. I wonder how they can be so convinced that they are immune from error and don't need the checks and balances of the debate in the Legislature or the public hearings or a full committee process.

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Their record has been disastrous to date. It has been full of the most gross mistakes that the government itself has had to correct. Look at Bill 26, the original bully bill. People have spoken about the 150 amendments the government itself brought in. We didn't even get through the whole bill and we had 150 amendments from the government itself.

Remember some of those pretty major mistakes. Do you remember the Minister for Municipal Affairs had a little part in there that was going to allow municipalities to raise a head tax on every resident of every municipality? Oh dear, they found a drafting error, they said afterwards. Just a small drafting error that they hadn't noticed in the original bill, but a fairly large mistake. Thank goodness we had a sit-in in the Legislature that forced the government to have public hearings long enough that they could at least fix that very large mistake, or Ontario residents would be facing a head tax as municipalities struggle to try and meet the needs in the face of government cuts and government offloading.

Remember the part of Bill 26 that the privacy commissioner said was a violation of the rights to privacy of individuals on the most sensitive of their health records. The government was forced by the privacy commissioner to bring an amendment to that part of Bill 26. The government had to scramble to bring in amendments to fix the worst of its mistakes in that bill.

The megacity bill: We thought maybe the government had learned that you've got to get the legislation at least reasonably right before you ram it through the House. The megacity bill had to be taken back and essentially rewritten by the government, not to respond to the concerns of the residents but to do some damage control because the government had everybody saying how wrong this was.

Today they fixed it by setting in place some community councils which in name only are like the original municipalities that they're shutting down. Today we find that some research has actually been done and community councils have been found to be completely ineffective. Don't you wish the government had taken the time to

find that out before they brought in their community council amendments to fix the legislation that was so bad to begin with?

The family support plan — I'm going to run out of time to chronicle all the mistakes this government has made in the two short years that it has been bringing forward its legislation — where there was absolutely no plan for getting it right, for implementing it to meet the needs of the people who are out there, families waiting to get their support cheques. The Ombudsman last week said this government must learn from its mistakes on the family support plan so they don't keep making the same mistakes over and over again. I don't think the government heard the message from the Ombudsman. I don't think the government wants to understand that it has to slow down if it's going to get it right.

Bill 104, the education bill: Over and over again parents came to our committee and they said, "Please take the time to get this right." This government has to bring in another piece of legislation to do what wasn't done in Bill 104 on school board amalgamation, and that's in spite of the fact that they put another commission in to give them advice on how to do all the things they didn't know how to do when they brought in the bill. They still made huge mistakes, even in the simplest things they did in that bill.

Amalgamation of school boards: They've had to go back and split up the boards in northwestern Ontario because they were so huge as to be completely unworkable, but they haven't had the time yet to fix the mistakes they've made across the rest of the province. This is a government in a hurry and prone to make a great many mistakes.

I think we have to talk about what good legislation is. I think we have to have some understanding of why we're here in this place, government members and opposition members alike. It is to be involved in a process of setting laws in the interest of the public that we represent and the public whom we serve. Surely our goal, all of us, is to create good law, good legislation — that's why we're here — legislation that's developed with an understanding of all the perspectives. Good legislation cannot be developed without consultation with everyone who is affected. Good legislation can't be developed without review by the critics, because that review is one of the important tests of whether your legislation is good or bad. There has to be a willingness to refine the legislation so it can be the best it can possibly be. That's our responsibility as legislators, and a government in a hurry is not prepared and clearly not able to bring in truly good legislation.

I think it's more than that, because good legislation is also legislation that brings people along, that can be implemented because people are supportive of it, they understand it, they're given the tools they need to be able to work with it, and that's not the kind of legislation this government in a hurry brings in.

Again, I'm not going to have time to chronicle it, but I know that on the school board amalgamation bill there are expectations of parent councils, and the parents have said: "What are they going to do if we're not prepared to do what the government wants? Are they going to bring

in parent press gangs and force us into service?" The government doesn't think about how they bring people along so they can implement their legislation. It's like the curriculum which is being dropped on teachers to be implemented this September, when teachers don't know what it is, aren't trained to do it and don't have materials to deliver it. It's like telling communities their hospitals are going to close and then forcing them to go out and raise millions and millions of dollars to support the closure of their hospitals and the government's restructuring plans. It isn't going to happen. If people don't believe you've got a good idea, they're not going to work with you on it, and the government in a hurry is going to be foiled by the very people it is forcing its legislation on.

I'm not going to have the time to go over the details of this legislation and the specifics that cause us to be concerned. My colleagues have done that in some detail. I want to take a moment, though, and comment on this idea that we should be extending the hours in which we debate because we are somehow, I think as the member for Nepean suggested, working a 20-hour week and should be working longer. I think it was the member for Simcoe Centre who said there was something wrong with our work ethics because we're not prepared to work longer.

First of all, this is not about spending more time in debate, as our House leader has said. If the government wants to spend more time in debate, we will come back and sit in the evenings, we will come back and sit in the month of July, as we came back and sat in the months of January and February. We'll be here to get the work done. This isn't about more time; this is about condensing two days into one so the government gets out of more question periods and so they can push legislation through faster.

I am offended beyond belief by the suggestions that the work we do here is our entire work as legislators. I suggest to the member for Nepean that if he is only working a 20-hour week, then maybe it's because he doesn't want to be in his constituency office talking to constituents. Maybe he's afraid of what his constituents are going to come and tell him about. Maybe he is only working a 20-hour week and maybe he's not spending time sitting down with the people who are going to be affected by the legislation and finding out what they think about it because he really doesn't want to hear what the people affected by the legislation have to say.

I spend a lot of time talking to people who are affected by the legislation this government is going to bring in, and it takes me a lot more than the 20 hours I spend sitting in the Legislative Assembly and participating in debates here. To me that is all part of the work we do, and I don't think we can do our work adequately as representatives of the public unless we're out there meeting with the public. If any members of this assembly are only working 20 hours a week, then they should be apologizing to the constituents they claim to represent.

There are a whole lot of people who should care about what's happening here, because this is about beating people up. It's about finding ways to rush through legislation that allows a government to ram through an agenda which has made victims of a lot of people in this

province already and which is going to continue to make victims of people.

The ability of this government to continue to ram through its agenda is not just an issue for legislators; it's an issue for people who are sick and are waiting in the hallways of emergency rooms because there aren't enough resources in their hospitals; it's an issue for seniors, those very people who have had their user fees rammed through on them in their earlier legislation; it's an issue for children whose educational opportunity is threatened by this government's initiatives.

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This greater ability of the government to ram through its legislation should be an issue for women and children who are victims of abuse, because they are also a target for this government as they want to shift, as they call it, to prevention from protection of those who've been abused.

This should be an issue for people who are on welfare, who have been hit and hit again by this government. It should be an issue for students, who are facing high tuition fees and greater debt loads because of this government's initiatives. It should be an issue for the injured workers, who were in the hallways of the Legislative Assembly this week trying to make their voices heard. It's an issue for public sector employees, it's an issue for police, it's an issue for firefighters, all of whom have come to this place and tried to make their concerns heard.

I am a legislator. I have been a legislator in government; am a legislator in opposition. I am conscientious, I believe, about the fact that I was elected to participate in governing, not as some kind of personal right. Never, including when I was part of a majority government, did I think I had a personal right to govern people. I had the privilege of representing people in order to bring about the kind of governance that would serve their interests, and never in the 10 years that I have taken a role in both opposition and government in this Legislature have I been more distressed at what I believe to be truly bad legislation. Never have I felt more strongly a sympathy with the citizens' need to express civil resistance to what I truly believe, over and over again, is bad legislation by a very bad government.

But I am afraid, given the past history of the last year and a half at least, that the bullies once again are going to ram through their legislation. They're going to ram it through, just as they eventually rammed through the original Bill 26 bully bill, just as they rammed through their megacity legislation, just as they rammed through their education bill.

I just actually had a note from the House leader that suggests there was a comment made by a member opposite that I think I'm not even going to dignify by responding to. There is not only an arrogance but an old boys' club attitude that comes into this Legislature sometimes, which I think maybe we just have to ignore in the hopes that maybe some of the members opposite will one day grow up and deserve to take their place as legislators in this assembly.

This government believes that if they get these rule changes through they will be able to do whatever they want to do with no opposition because the bullies will be

in complete control of the school yard. I want to serve notice, as my colleagues have served notice on this government, that we are not going to let them beat up on democracy. We are not going to fold up our tent and go away because they have tried to muzzle us in every possible way. We are not going to just quietly accept this government's dictatorial approach, no matter what they try and do to silence us. We are not going to leave the school yard to the bullies, because this is not a school yard; this is a Legislative Assembly.

And it concerns me that perhaps those who have only been in this place for some two years have no real sense of the purpose of it, of the role that we play. Perhaps we all need to step back and remember, as my colleagues, including the person presently in the Speaker's chair, have so eloquently expressed over the course of this evening, that democracy is indeed about people. It is about government that is for the people and of the people, even though with this government it is clearly not government by the people.

People do have differing views, as my colleague from Kingston and The Islands has said. Within this House we will have at least two, often three different perspectives. There are more than that when we really take into consideration the different concerns and needs and perspectives of all those whom we represent. The purposes of a democracy, of government for the people, of the people and, hopefully, sometimes by the people, cannot be served unless there is time taken to fully understand the concerns, the different perspectives, of all those whom we represent.

That means that inevitably democracy will be about dissent and about debate. Inevitably it is going to be messy and often it is going to be confrontational. But even when it is messy, even when it is confrontational, even when it is angry, the democratic process and the debate and dissent that then leads to the best legislation and the best government that can possibly be provided is simply too important to lose because we have a government run by folks in the back room who are so anxious to get on with their agenda that they don't want any inconvenient democratic debate to get in their way.

Mr Len Wood: I'm pleased to take the next 30 minutes to enter into the debate on the government motion that was brought forward to change the rules of this Legislature and muzzle the opposition members so that they're not going to be able to enter into a fair debate and make sure the public is well aware of the legislation that is being brought forward, whether it be an attack on workers, as we see in Bill 99, the WCB bill, or whether it's Bill 136, the attack on the public sector workers, where they're going to be asked to pay for all the downloading that the government has decided to do when they are restructuring hospitals, school boards and the rest of the public sector.

It's fairly serious when we look at the rule changes that are being brought forward. I'm sure there's a lot more discussion that can be entered into, but at this time of night I just want to begin on it and point out that some of the people right within the Tory caucus are saying there's something wrong in this province when the

Premier and a couple of unelected people in the Premier's office can run the show.

When we see the changes that are being brought forward here to limit the debate, to try to muzzle the opposition, to try to change the time that question period debate can take place to 4 o'clock instead of having it at the regular time — I don't see that much wrong with the rules that are here other than the fact that the government Tory caucus has a hidden agenda. They have other pieces of legislation they would like to bring forward, and instead of having it debated at first reading and second reading and then going into committee and travelling around the province, they would like to have the right to bring it in and have it passed into law in about three days.

The member who brought it forward is saying, "We want to make the rules very similar to the House of Commons." We have to understand that there are 301 members in the House of Commons, and as the next election rolls around, there will only be 103 members in

the Ontario Legislature. I don't think changing the rules to allow the backbenchers more time to debate is necessary, because they're controlled by the government whip and the government House leader and the people within their own caucus. They're telling them whether they can debate legislation or whether they can't debate legislation.

I started out talking about an attack on workers. There's another resolution that's coming forward. You talk about the attack on the workers. Mr Fox has brought forward a resolution that is another attack on the unionized workers in this province that is going to be debated in a resolution next week. It's one attack after the other. Continuously over the last two years we've seen nothing but attacks to destroy, eliminate or, in this particular case, reduce the amount of time —

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is now midnight and this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2400.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Chris Stockwell
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma	Wildman, Bud (ND)	High Park-Swansea	Shea, Derwyn (PC)
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Huron	Johns, Helen (PC)
Beaches-Woodbine	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Kenora	Miclash, Frank (L)
Brampton North / -Nord	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton South / -Sud	Clement, Tony (PC)	Kitchener	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant-Haldimand	Preston, Peter L. (PC)	Kitchener-Wilmot	Leadston, Gary L. (PC)
Brantford	Johnson, Ron (PC)	Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon	Pouliot, Gilles (ND)
Bruce	Fisher, Barbara (PC)	Lambton	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington South / -Sud	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister without Portfolio (seniors issues) / ministre sans portefeuille (affaires des personnes âgées)	Lanark-Renfrew	Jordan, W. Leo (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lawrence	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels
Carleton East / -Est	Morin, Gilles E. (L)	Lincoln	Sheehan, Frank (PC)
Chatham-Kent	Carroll, Jack (PC)	London Centre / -Centre	Boyd, Marion (ND)
Cochrane North / -Nord	Wood, Len (ND)	London North / -Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Cochrane South / -Sud	Bisson, Gilles (ND)	London South / -Sud	Wood, Bob (PC)
Comwall	Cleary, John C. (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Don Mills	Johnson, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, government House leader / président du Conseil de gestion, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Middlesex	Smith, Bruce (PC)
Dovercourt	Silipo, Tony (ND)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Downsview	Castrilli, Annamarie (L)	Mississauga North / -Nord	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Education and Training / ministère de l'Éducation et de la Formation
Dufferin-Peel	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Durham Centre / -Centre	Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister without Portfolio (privatization) / ministre sans portefeuille (privatisation)
Durham East / -Est	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne	Grimmett, Bill (PC)
Durham West / -Ouest	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires	Nepean	Baird, John R. (PC)
Durham-York	Munro, Julia (PC)	Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)
Eglinton	Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William (PC) Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme	Niagara South / -Sud	Hudak, Tim (PC)
Elgin	North, Peter (Ind)	Nickel Belt	Laughren, Floyd (ND)
Essex-Kent	Hoy, Pat (L)	Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Essex South / -Sud	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Norfolk	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Etobicoke-Humber	Ford, Douglas B. (PC)	Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)	Oakville South / -Sud	Carr, Gary (PC)
Etobicoke-Rexdale	Hastings, John (PC)	Oakwood	Colle, Mike (L)
Etobicoke West / -Ouest	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Speaker / Président	Oriole	Vacant
Fort William	McLeod, Lyn (L)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
Fort York	Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)
Frontenac-Addington	Vankoughnet, Bill (PC)	Ottawa East / -Est	Grandmaître, Bernard (L)
Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Ottawa-Rideau	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)
Guelph	Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Halton Centre / -Centre	Young, Terence H. (PC)	Ottawa West / -Ouest	Chiarelli, Robert (L)
Halton North / -Nord	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)
Hamilton Centre / -Centre	Christopherson, David (ND)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		
Hamilton Mountain	Pettit, Trevor (PC)		
Hamilton West / -Ouest	Ross, Lillian (PC)		
Hastings-Peterborough	Danford, Harry (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Parkdale Parry Sound	Ruprecht, Tony (L) Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Scarborough North / -Nord Scarborough West / -Ouest Simcoe Centre / -Centre Simcoe East / -Est Simcoe West / -Ouest	Curling, Alvin (L) Brown, Jim (PC) Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) McLean, Allan K. (PC) Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé
Perth Peterborough Port Arthur Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell Prince Edward-Lennox- South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox- Hastings-Sud	Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) Gravelle, Michael (L) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L) Fox, Gary (PC)	Sudbury Sudbury East / -Est Timiskaming Victoria-Haliburton	Bartolucci, Rick (L) Martel, Shelley (ND) Ramsay, David (L) Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Quinte Rainy River	Rollins, E.J. Douglas (PC) Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / Chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique	Waterloo North / -Nord	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Renfrew North / -Nord Riverdale S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est	Conway, Sean G. (L) Churley, Marilyn (ND) Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Welland-Thorold Wellington Wentworth East / -Est Wentworth North / -Nord Willowdale	Kormos, Peter (ND) Amott, Ted (PC) Doyle, Ed (PC) Skarica, Toni (PC) Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
St Andrew-St Patrick St Catharines St Catharines-Brock St George-St David	Bassett, Isabel (PC) Bradley, James J. (L) Froese, Tom (PC) Leach, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Wilson Heights Windsor-Riverside Windsor-Sandwich Windsor-Walkerville York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L) Vacant Pupatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Samia Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est Scarborough-Ellesmere	Boushy, Dave (PC) Martin, Tony (ND) Phillips, Gerry (L) Newman, Dan (PC) Gilchrist, Steve (PC) Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs	York East / -Est York Mills York-Mackenzie Yorkview	Parker, John L. (PC) Tumbull, David (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South / -Sud	Kennedy, Gerard (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Administration of justice / Administration de la justice

Chair / Président: Gerry Martiniuk
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: E.J. Douglas Rollins
Dave Boushy, Robert Chiarelli, David Christopherson,
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Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos, Gerry Martiniuk,
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Bruce Smith, Bud Wildman
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